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Three women of frontier Montana

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THREE WOMEN OF FRONTIER MONTANA

by

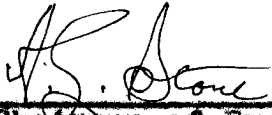
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requirement for the degree of
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1932

Approved:



Chairman of Examining Committee



Chairman of Graduate Committee

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THREE WOMEN OF FRONTIER MONTANA

Part I - - - - - Phoebe Goodell-Train

Part II - - - - - Electa Bryan-Plummer

Part III - - - - - Natowap' Tsis-Tseksin

"Three Women of Frontier Montana" is written in an effort to tell the story of three interesting individuals, who with others of their kind, have played important parts in the early history of this state, and to show something of the manners and customs of the period in which each lived.

Phoebe Goodell-Train

"You hear a great deal about what the Pilgrim Fathers suffered," a professor of Colonial literature once remarked. "But what about the Pilgrim Mothers? They suffered all that the Pilgrim Fathers suffered and they suffered the Pilgrim Fathers besides." I suppose the same thing might be said about pioneer women everywhere, the Catherine Goodells and the Phoebe Trains, who left homes and friends, and the softness and security dear to the heart of woman, to crawl in never ending dust and heat across vast, open prairies, beset by dangers on every hand.

But if this is to be said it must be said by others. The pioneer women do not say it. "We suffered with them," is the way they put it.

Electa Bryan-Plummer

Not essentially a dramatic personality herself, an accident of life pulled Electa Bryan briefly into the fierce limelight that subsequent events threw over this period of Montana history; accident, too, permitted her to evade direct rays of the search-light, to linger, somewhat out of focus, in the twilight off stage, where, courageous, composed, she waited in silence and dignity, fearful, perhaps, that an inadvertent movement of hers might bring a hurrying finger of light to search her out.

Romantic, sentimental, impossible stories have grown out of the obscurity that she and her friends have maintained about her, but none of them provoked her out of her silence. Now that she is dead, and no longer winces before the peculiar sympathy of a curious world, her story, strangely uneventful after the Plummer episode, can be told.

Natowap' Tsis-Tseksin

The story of Na-ta-wis-ta, and others of her kind, can never be adequately written. Only in brief glimpses here and there in the correspondence of her times, in practical entries in journals kept by white men, meager statements in reports, passenger lists of steamboats, do we get the story of the Indian woman. Only a woman, and an Indian woman at that, what she thought, did, and said, could be of little importance to a world waiting for deeds of men. What has been recorded is, necessarily, the interpretation of white men, who, aside from any possible selfish motives, could yet not fail to give distorted pictures, influenced as they were by race, customs, language.

Incomplete as the story is, it is offered after the most trying effort to fit together the very slender contributions, carefully sifted from the writing of, and about, the period in which she lived. A number of interesting rumors that persist among the Culbertson descendants have not been used because, though possible, in some instances even probable, they cannot be authenticated. One such is the story that Na-ta-wis-ta once saved a fur post, probably McKenzie, from an Indian attack, probably the Crows. But Hiram Chittenden, who has made a critical study

of the times, depreciates the story of the Crow attack, because they were a friendly people to the whites.

There is no doubt, however, that Na-ta-wis-ta was outstanding in her time and I have no hesitancy in including her among women who have played important parts in the early history of Montana.

PART I

Phoebe Goodell-Train

Little Phoebe Goodell,¹ standing beside her father on the ferryboat, watched with fearful eyes the gap of black, swirling water widening between them and the Kanessville² side of the river. In the wagon behind them were her mother and brother, Clarence, just three years old, and behind their wagon was that of her uncle and aunt, the Alexander Grays.³ Almost three weeks before, April 1860, they had left Elkhorn, Wisconsin enroute for California. It had been exciting at first, going to California, but after the first week she had first amused and then provoked her elders by her repeated 'How much farther is it to California, now?' There were no other children in their party; Mrs. Goodell hoped there would be company for her in the train that they expected to join in Omaha.

On the levee on the Omaha side were all sorts of goods just unloaded from a river boat and piled helter

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1. Phoebe Train, nee Goodell, was ten years old at this time. She was born in Oconomowoc, Dodge County, Wisconsin. Her father, Dwight T., and her mother, Catherine M., were a pioneering people, having come to Wisconsin from New York shortly after their marriage. See Mrs. Train's Application for Membership to Society of Montana Pioneers, Historical Library, Helena.
 2. Kanessville, now Council Bluffs, Iowa.
 3. Mrs. Gray was Mrs. Goodell's sister.

skelter; bales of dry goods, sacks of sugar and coffee, barrels of flour, bags and cases of smoked meats and dried fruits, kegs of fish in brine, of molasses, of butter.

They were being loaded upon warehouse wagons which went creaking off up the road to the business section of the town. There they would be stored briefly in warehouses until the freighters from outlying posts and supply forts came to pack them in huge ⁴Murphy wagons for transportation across the prairies.

The deeply rutted mainstreet of the town they now entered was a tangle of traffic, through which her father skilfully drove his fine team of horses, watching, as he drove along, for a good place to leave the wagons while he sought out others who might be ready to start out on the Overland trail. ⁵They had, thriftily, brought supplies of their own preparation; flour milled from their own wheat, meat that they had salted themselves, dried apples, beans, peas, corn, and pumpkin that they had harvested last fall from their own garden. Besides these things

4. Arthur Jerome Dickson, Covered Wagon Days, (Clark, Cleveland, 1929), p. 51.

5. This trail was known by various names along different stretches of its length: Overland trail, Oregon trail, Mormon road, Emigrant road, Salt Lake route, California trail, Chittenden, History of the American Fur Trade in the Far West (3 Vols. Harper, New York, 1903) pp. 466 et seq.

her mother had buried many jars of canned fruit and jelly in barrels of flour.⁶ There would be but a few staple articles, coffee and sugar, for them to purchase here in Omaha, and a good thing, for the town was a confused mass of horses, cattle, people and wagons, congesting the streets of the prairie town. The stores were full of buyers and it would take a long time to get anything. The men found a place to leave the wagons and went off to inquire for a train they might join.

Mrs. Gray tied their team to the Goodell wagon and came inside to visit until they should start. The women congratulated each other on their having put down in oats a supply of eggs, at five cents a dozen, at a little town on the Iowa side, for in a window of a grocery store they saw that here they would have cost almost as much again. While they sat waiting they watched the crowd, as it shifted back and forth through the streets.

Occasional coarse laughter, mingled with the slap of cards and the click of poker chips, drifted out to the street when the swinging doors of a nearby place emitted huge, swaying, loud voiced men, bullwhackers and mule-skinners on the loose for an hour or so while their loads were being made up. When these men went by, Mrs. Goodell

6. Mrs. Phoebe Train, Interview.

and Mrs. Gray drew back under the shelter of the canvass for one never knew what that 'kind of a man might say.'

Here and there they saw men in uniform, soldiers come out for frontier duty. Indians variously clad in blankets and odd garments of white dress idled along through the crowd, indifferent to the wide-eyed stare of Easterners. Greasy-looking little breeds stood with noses pressed against tempting display windows, skuttling out of the way of danger when a group of teamsters, boisterous, uncertain of step, came weaving down the street.

Before long Dwight Goodell returned to say that they were just in time to join a train that would be leaving the day after tomorrow. The wagons were beyond the town about a mile and he proposed to join them there that night. He had purchased sugar, tea, and coffee, and he thought they should lay in 50 or 100 pounds of potatoes as he had been told this would probably be their last chance to get any.

That afternoon they camped on a little creek west of Omaha with a number of other wagons. The next day they spent in putting the outfit in condition for the long trip across the Platte country. The women washed and baked, packed the baggage more compactly to accommodate the new supplies, and patched and darned. The men tended the

stock, doctoring harness galls and changing shoes,
greased wagons and patched harness.⁷ At night there were
visits to other campfires, where they compared notes as
to where they had come from, where they were headed for,
and what was to be expected ahead.

The second morning the train started. There were
thirty wagons,⁸ the majority of which were drawn by ox
teams. These were slow, deliberate animals, steady and
enduring. The horse teams traveled much faster and so those
having them were ordered ahead by the train captain. This
was good fortune for the Goodells and the Grays for in this
position they avoided the choking dust that later in the
sweltering days across the alkali flats, made trail days
so unbearable.

The trail now crossed the Missouri river brakes,
rough, choppy country, led over gently rolling prairie and
across the broad, beautiful valley of the Elkhorn river,

7. Dickson, op.cit., p.36; pp.89 - 90; p.129
Train, op.cit.

8. a. Sarah Raymond Herndon, Days on The Road (New York, 1902), pp.7

b. Dickson; op.cit., p.149: "Theirs was an uncommonly large train, forty or fifty wagons."

c. Train, op.cit., Mrs. Train scoffed at the idea of there being a hundred wagons in one train, as pictured in The Covered Wagon, cineograph. She said it would be impossible to graze the cattle necessary for that many wagons.

crossed by an easy ford, and on over level stretches to the Platte river, up which it would lead for perhaps 700 miles. The Platte in this lower part of its course is a broad, shallow, slow-flowing stream, which, however, is full of sudden holes and dangerous sands. Low, rolling hills sweep off toward the south, covered with luxuriant grass, and shaded by gnarled scrub oaks. Nearer the stream, on wide bottom land grows great groves of cottonwoods backed by rough bluffs of limestone, the ancient banks of the river.⁹ Travel along this stretch of the road was very pleasant with the broad, sedate Platte flowing effortlessly along on the left, and long stretches of rich, short grass country on the right, as far as one could see.

10

They corralled each night, the train captain designating the location. When he found a suitable place he rode out where all could see him, gave the necessary signals to the first and central wagons which left the road, the first swinging out toward the captain; the other

9. This country is near my home. I know it well.

10. Train, op.cit.: Each Saturday night the captain of their train was elected to serve for one week. While a man was captain his word was law about all things concerning the train: where they should camp, whether they should corral, how long they should remain, where the cattle should be grazed, the strength of the herding force, etc.

and all following it crossed over a sufficient space to form a circle which would be enclosed by wagons of all the train turned tongues out, so that they would not interfere in hitching and unhitching. When the corral was completed each wagon stood nearly parallel to the one ahead and all of them were on the diagonal, the inside cover of each succeeding one almost touching the outside cover of the one ahead.¹¹ After the corral was formed the horses and oxen were outspanned¹² and driven down to the river to drink. The night herders sometimes had to drive them some distance off the trail for grazing. They selected a protected place when possible; while they were advancing¹³ up the Platte they often swam them across to an island where they grazed and rested until about dawn. If an attack from Indians were feared the cattle would be kept¹⁴ in to corral and a strong guard maintained all night long.

While the men were looking after the cattle the women were getting supper with the help of the older children who gathered fire wood if they were in a wooded

11. Herndon, op.cit., p.79.
Dickson, op.cit., p.108.

12. Ibid., p.20.

13. Herndon, op.cit., p.101: "The men have driven the stock across to an island."

14. Dickson, op.cit., pp.106-107.

¹⁵
 region. The Goodells had a small sheet-iron stove, a somewhat unusual luxury, which Mrs. Goodell declared gave her all the comforts and conveniences of her kitchen at home. And certainly it did make the cooking much easier. This was lifted from its place at the back of the wagon, the fire made, water brought up, the grub-boxes opened, and the meal prepared: meat, fresh if the hunters had been successful, otherwise cured; potatoes, as long as they lasted, and after that peas, corn, hominy, beans or other dried vegetables; salt rising bread,¹⁶ or if the meal were hurried, biscuits; occasionally fresh greens picked along the trail; dried apple sauce, or, less frequently, canned fruit or jelly. Later in the season they sometimes found wild fruit near the camp ground,¹⁷ and often the men were lucky at fishing, and supplied the table with fine catfish or trout, depending on the locality. Coffee was bought in the whole berry and ground as needed, the coffee grinder being fastened to the endgate.

15. When they knew they were leaving a wooded region they fastened long logs for firewood to the wagon reach. When they needed firewood they sawed off a few lengths and split it up. Herndon, op.cit. p.112: "Cedar logs are fastened under the wagon, lengthwise, between the wheels." Dickson, op.cit. p.58: "We chopped down a good sized tree which we sawed into stove lengths, putting as much as we could into the front end of each wagon....We then fastened a piece of timber to the reach of my wagon."

16. Ibid., p.150.

17. Ibid., p.129; p.151.

resting and grazing the cattle, after some particularly hard stretch of trail. At such times wagons were repaired, cattle and horses shod, and harness mended. Mr. Goodell had tools for horse-shoeing and wagon repairing, and did this work for the whole train. The women took advantage of these long stops to wash and mend clothes, 'bake up' bread and beans, and 'cook up' sauce.

When camp was broken in the early morning the wagons took their respective places in the train, the corral unwinding in two parts, one behind the lead wagon, the other behind the center wagon, so that the location of a wagon in the train was the same day after day,¹⁹ unless accident or something of the sort caused an outfit to drop out. The monotony of the long, slow day was broken by 'emigrant calls' when the members of different wagons would change places for the day, a group of parents riding together in one wagon while their children visited, or 'courted' in the other wagon.²⁰ The wagon train was a village on wheels and all the activities of stable village life took place in it.

One child was born on the trail, but it died within the²¹ week. The next morning the train delayed an hour, while

19. Herndon, op. cit., p. 78.

20. Ibid., p. 32; p. 43 et passim.

21. Train, op. cit.

the little body, 'laid out' by the kind women, was given simple but decent burial. The wagons moved on carrying a sad-eyed mother, obsessed by the gruesome picture of a little grave despoiled by wolves or Indians.

Occasionally wagons from the west camped near them, sometimes bringing news of Indian depredations that frightened the travelers and strengthened the night guard. These meetings were fine opportunities to get first hand information concerning the trails, the country ahead, the best stops for good feed and water. They often had as guests for the night the Pony Express riders who could give them last minute news about road conditions and the disposition of the Indians at the moment.

The Indians themselves often called on the camp, eager to barter their hand-work, leather moccasins and parfleches embroidered with beads and porcupine quills, freshly killed game, and fish for food made of flour, all of which they called biseuit.²² The white people were often glad to buy their fresh meat but the Indians themselves soon became a nuisance for they were 'slippery fingered', and some of the most valued possessions of the travelers must, of necessity, be left about for handy use, guns, ammunition, axes, kettles and pans. The children of course never tired

22. Train, op. cit.

of having these visitors, though, like Phoebe, they hid behind their mothers, watching the transaction with a fluctuating courage. Many reports of Indian depredations were beginning to reach the campers: stories of whole herds being stampeded and run off, whole parties left afoot, camps cut to pieces by bands of swooping, howling devils on horseback who streaked past huddled wagons shooting as they went. They passed new graves, too, and once, the charred remains of wagons. Then the faces of the elders grew lined and grim, and a silence fell on the children.

But though they were in the Indian country and daily saw Indians or evidence of them, it was weeks before anything like an attack came, in a valley much narrower and much more hemmed in than this broad, open Platte valley.

It was amazing how uniformly broad and open it had remained through all their weeks of travel. They were now
²³ at the forks, ²⁴ having passed Brady island and the Grand

23. Just across the river was another branch of the Overland trail that led to Julesburg, made famous by Joseph Slade, division agent for the Overland, who was said to have cut off the ears of Jules Reni, thieving employee. Afterward, the story goes, whenever he wished to create a stir in a crowded barroom he would slap down the ears of poor Jules in payment of his liquor. Mrs. Herndon, op.cit., p.105, whose party took this route says: "A rather insignificant looking place to have such notoriety as it has in the papers."

24. Named for Brady, a fur trader who was killed here by one of his fellows in 1833. Chittenden, op.cit., p.466.

island, a long, green, forested island that lay along their left just across a narrow stream of swift water. Two or three days beyond the forks they saw, suddenly rising out of the road ahead, a slender spire that grew higher and higher as they advanced day by day, until it stood out distinctly on the bluff across the river, a solitary shaft of sandstone at least two hundred feet high. This was the Chimney²⁵ Rock the Express riders had mentioned, an old and distinctive landmark of the region. Just one day afterward they came to Scottsbluff,²⁶ another sandstone formation, looking like a ruined castle towering above the comparatively low banks of the Platte, its ridges and shelves softened by a growth of small cedars. A few days beyond this place they got their first view of a mountain peak, Laramie,²⁷ a tiny mound at first, hazy blue, that lifted higher and higher with each day's progress, and took on soft rose and purple lights at sunset and sunrise. When they reached the old fort it was still far ahead.

25. Chittenden, op.cit., p.467.

26. Washington Irving, Captain Bonneville, quoted in Chittenden, op.cit., p.468: Scott, a fur trader, ill, was abandoned here by his party. The next year, probably 1830, his skeleton was found on these bluffs; it was supposed he had crawled after his men at least 30 miles.

27. Dickson, op.cit., p.74.

28

Across from old Fort Laramie the train probably halted, permitting those who wished, to visit the post, which had its usual quota of dirty Indians lounging about. Here at the sutler's store new supplies of staples could be laid in, at stiff prices however.

A little above the present site of Casper was the ford of the North Platte, the best on this part of the river, where the road that had paralleled the south side of the stream came in. The Goodells and their friends, watching the horses and oxen struggling up the slippery banks, straining at heavy lurching wagons and urged on by the crack of black-snakes and the curses of drivers, were glad that they had remained on the north bank.

29

They were now on the most difficult stretch of the road, according to advice they had received from eastward bound teams and riders. The trail skirted the northern edge of the

28. Known as Fort William, Fort John, Fort Laramie in different periods of the fur trading days. Chittenden, op.cit., p.967. Said to have been named for Joseph La Rame, fur trader, who, 1821, lost his life on the river on which the post was built. Ibid., p.469.

29. Cf. map, Chittenden, op.cit.: According to Chittenden the trail forded the North fork of the Platte at Fort Laramie, passed up the south bank, and forded to the north bank again about where Casper now stands. Map, Dickinson, op.cit. shows a trail on both sides of the North fork up to this point, Casper, beyond which there is shown only one trail, on the north bank.

Laramie mountains, verging toward the left away from the Platte which it finally left altogether. It was a toilsome, up grade climb over stretches of alkali-whitened country that gave back the glare of the sun. Clouds of lye-like dust, powder-fine, settled on everything, rimming eyes, mouth, and nostrils. The smell from alkali sinks was nauseating. Some of the cattle, allowed to drink at these sinks became 'alkalied' and required strenuous dosing with bacon and bacon fat to keep them alive.³⁰ The Goodell's horses became so sore-footed and lame that they could go no farther.³¹ They limped along making sad mileage for days and the situation was becoming desperate.

Goodell knew that he could not afford to hold back the train with inadequate animals. No one felt that he could spare any oxen for the remainder of the journey but for this stretch of the way they would see him through; he could get new animals somewhere along the route, they felt sure. The very next day the train was visited by a man buying up sore-footed and alkalied animals and selling well ones in their

30. Dickson, op.cit., pp.117 - 118.
Herndon, op.cit., p.147.

31. Mrs. Train could not recall just where this happened. I put it at this point in the journey because from all accounts this was the most difficult stretch on the whole trip, one where the horses and cattle gave out oftenest.

32
places. Dwight Goodell replaced his horses with oxen, which drew the wagons all the rest of the trip to California.

After days of struggling through choking, stinging clouds of alkali they came out on the Sweetwater, the only fresh-water stream in the neighborhood, which the trail followed for several days, making at least three crossings. 33
Along their left for many miles had lain a huge, oval rock, shaped like a turtle, Independence Rock, which Father DeSmet, on his way to the great council of 1851, had seen and called the "Register of the Desert" 34 because of the many names cut into it.

Ahead of them was South Pass, a broad, open valley of gentle slope, 35 which, however, had a very definite grade. About three miles this side of South Pass Lander's cutoff started, they knew, and there had been much uncertainty and discussion as to which road they should take. Those who were

32. Dickson, op.cit., p.119: "Sometimes during the day we met two mountain men who had their camp up in a draw north of the road. They made a business of buying alkalied or sorefooted stock and doctoring them up to sell again when cured."
33. Cf. Map, Chittenden, op.cit., Trail does not cross the Sweetwater but lies to the north of the stream. Dickson map, op.cit. shows at least three crossings.
34. Cf. Map, Chittenden shows Independence Rock lying to the north of the trail. Father Jean Pierre DeSmet, Life and Travels Among the North American Indians, ed. Chittenden and Richardson, (4 Vols. Harper, New York) Vol. 4, p.134
35. Discovery of South Pass is ascribed to Etienne Provost, probably in 1823, while in the service of the Rocky Mountain Fur company. Chittenden, op.cit., p.271; p.476.

going to California had planned to restock supplies at Salt Lake City, but if they took the cutoff they would miss this place. They would, however, save themselves a distance of 200 miles, and have good grass and water for their weary animals. This last consideration decided them. They took the cutoff.

36

Near the Utah line they had their first Indian scare. They had fought mosquitoes all morning long; sitting in their slow moving wagons which fell from one chuck hole to another, they waved branches of quaking aspen incessantly. At noon the smoke from the campfires gave them some relief and they were lingering over their lunch, reluctant to continue the fight with rough roads and mosquitoes, when suddenly down the slopes of the narrow gulch poured bands of redskins. The train, strung out along the narrow canyon, was not arranged for defense, and no corral could be made, but the men rushed for their firearms and the women hustled the children into the wagons where the supplies could be shifted for defense. There were no war whoops, but the campers saw in this silence only menace. Suddenly the whole happening was explained for down the canyon swept a company of soldiers, before whom the Indians vanished, silent, as they had come. The troopers asked a few questions, but could not stop for

lunch; they pushed on down the trail, grimfaced. The campers, seeing in their imagination ravaged trains and scalped and maimed bodies, wished them luck.

Before they reached Fort Hall there was a rearrangement of the train for here some of the wagons were to take the Oregon trail. There were, however, others waiting to take their places in the California train, which now took the trail leading away to the south and west, around the northern end of the Wasatch mountain range and along the Snake river,³⁷ for a short distance, before striking off into a dry, sandy country of sparse vegetation, patches of gray-green sagebrush, tough as whet leather. They were out of the dangerous Indian country now, for the natives of this region, poor, childishly curious, were without weapons or desire to harm anyone. After perhaps a week, they reached the Humboldt³⁸ river down which they trudged for laborious weeks, passing the ugly, evil-smelling sinks, and continuing on over the rough, broken foothills that would soon give way to the Sierra Nevadas. They entered the Washoe valley,

37. See Map, Chittenden, op. cit.

38. Humboldt river was so re-named by Fremont, a piece of impertinence, thinks Chittenden, op.cit., p.797, for it had long been known as Ogden river for Peter Skene Ogden, a Hudson's Bay trader in the region in the early days. It was also known as Mary river by the trappers of his time because his Indian wife, Mary, was from one of the tribes of the valley.

perhaps camped on the Carson river. This was beautiful green country after the long, empty stretches of sage-brush and they must have enjoyed the rest here. This section of Nevada had been settled for several years, and they perhaps went up to Virginia City to look at the famous old Comstock. But after a period of recuperation they set out again for their climb over the Sierra Nevadas, that here rise abruptly from the valley floor. There were stage routes here to Susanville, to Placerville and other mining towns across the divide, so that their journey was over well used roads. The party took the Placerville road and after a stiff climb that lasted all of one long day spent the night about a third of the way up the pass. Several more days were spent in reaching the summit, their road taking them around the southern end of beautiful Lake Tahoe, lying below them blue-green in its mountain setting.³⁹

The descent was made with little difficulty and after a few more days the train pulled into Placerville. The Goodells rested here for a time, but continued their journey to Marysville where they had decided to settle.

However, after a year they again loaded up the prairie schooner and moved up the coast to Salem, Oregon, where they stayed for two years, until they were attracted to Idaho City

39. Old maps show the trail going around the south end of the lake.

by the marvelous stories of wealth of that section. After three years here they recrossed the Rocky Mountains enroute to Last Chance Gulch, whose rich placers were just then the talk of the northwest. At Idaho City, Phoebe, now a pretty young lady of fifteen years, had become engaged to Edgar H. Train, a man somewhat older than herself. He had gone with his parents to California in 1852, and, like the Goodells had been something of a wanderer since. When the Goodells decided to go to Montana, Mr. Train argued for immediate marriage; the Goodells consented provided their children would move to Montana with them.⁴⁰ Shortly after the wedding they left Idaho City in two wagons. They had six horses, two yokes of oxen and two cows, which, broken to the yoke, made intelligent, docile, and willing leaders. They kept the party in fresh milk and butter, and since they could be driven, saved the owners the trouble of herding them. The trip was not a hurried one; they arrived in Last Chance on September 3, 1866, one month after they had started.

They found the town of low log houses, three years old now, sprawled along the bottom of a very dirty mining gulch, its narrow little stream cluttered with equipment and mining gear of every description. The streets were a confused mass

40. Party consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Goodell, Mr. and Mrs. Train, and Claren Goodell, about eight years old.

of freight wagons and emigrant outfits. The sidewalks were monopolized by auctioneers hoarsely crying horses, oxen,⁴¹ mules, wagons, miners' equipment, and household goods. A constant stream of bearded and booted men drifted in and out of the saloons, legion in number, where sweaty bartenders mopped at sloppy bars between servings. The hurdy-gurdy houses, where whiskey sold for fifty cents a drink and champagne for \$12.00 a bottle, were filled with visitors, ranging from judges to scalawags, in every kind of costume from broadcloth to buckskin. Fiddle music and the sounds of the dance drifted out from these places at all hours of the day and night, with the noises of drinking and cursing and fighting between acts. The game places, noisy with the click of the roulette wheel, the slap of cards, the clatter of chips, the bark of the faro dealer, kept its crowds against all other attractions, horny-handed miners eager to stake their poke o' dust against the cards of suave gentlemen, cool-eyed, nimble-fingered dealers who lived by their wits.

At the International Hotel, "comfortable and genteel in its appointments", prices for the five of them would be \$125.00 a week;⁴² other hotels were as high, in comparison, and all were crowded. The Goodells and the Trains went back

41. Daniel S. Tuttle, Bishop, Reminiscences of a Missionary Bishop (Whittake New York, 1906), p.140; p.142; p.190
 42. These rates are given by Tuttle, ibid., p.213

to their wagons; they moved down the gulch a short distance and camped on the stream, Last Chance creek, which above was so crowded. They remained here for two weeks while Mr. Goodell looked over the lay of the land.

At the end of that time he announced his plans. "I know more about a plow than I do about a gold pan" was his verdict, perhaps made from past experiences in Idaho. He proposed to buy a piece of property on the outskirts of the town where he would grow vegetables for sale to the miners and hotel keepers. The field was open, all other newcomers being blind to every prospect but mining.

Their garden was located at the junction of Oro Fino⁴³ and Grizzley Gulches, and here Dwight Goodell produced fine vegetables that took many prizes in the first Territorial Fair in 1868. But at this time mining, the chief industry in the region, had first rights everywhere. If a man washing gravel at the back door of a store found color and wished to develop the find he staked out a claim and the store keeper moved to another location. The Goodells had not taken out mineral rights on their little piece of property though they had built a house there. It

43. These two gulches come together to form Last Chance. Later the town of Unionville grew up around the mine of Whitlatch-Union Company in Grizzley, and Park City in Oro Fino.

was not long before someone had filed on their garden spot, and Goodell had to look for another location. He homesteaded the property now owned by the State Nursery Company, building his house just above, and across the road from, the hot springs that later became the famous Broadwater Natatorium. His son, Clarence, added a new branch to the industry when he introduced bee-keeping in 1871. He was just a lad 14 years old at the time, but he drove alone to Corrine, Utah, got his bees and returned to Helena where he put them to work making honey in his father's clover fields.

The Trains decided to go into a business in town. There were two photograph galleries in the camp, one owned by Madame Eckhardt and the other by a man named Douglas, and both did a thriving business. Edgar Train bought the Douglas Galleries,⁴⁴ which were over the old Cosmopolitan Hotel, and with the help of Mrs. Train, who did the retouching work, built up a splendid business. The leaders in the mining, social, and financial life of the territory all patronized the Train galleries and many fine pictures of that day, still in existence, bear the Train stamp.⁴⁵

The big fire of 1874 swept away the Cosmopolitan Hotel

44. See Helena Directory, 1868.

45. There are many of them in the Historical Library.

and their gallery and equipment went with it, but they purchased more and established their business in quarters built for them, in an addition to their home on Cutler street. Mr. Train exhibited some of his photographic art at the World's Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876 and was the only photographer west of the Mississippi to take⁴⁶ a prize.

In the fall of 1867 they made a gypsy tour of the state with a gallery on wheels, a huge van pulled by four horses. Their stops, announced ahead of time by printed bills, brought everyone in the town, from the young dandies and their sweethearts to the grizzled old prospectors who decided that it would be a good time to get a 'likeness' to send 'back east'.

In 1876 Edgar Train sold out his business to O. C. Bundy, who had been in the business with him for a number of years. Later he opened an assay office in a building at the foot of Broadway. He moved his family to a home between the Goodell ranch and Helena, which later became

46. Mrs. Train still has two of these prize winning exhibits, 56 years old, now, in their original frames. They are in good condition, clear and distinct, a proof of the thorough workmanship and skill of the photographer. They were taken before the days of dry plates when every one had to prepare his own plates, make his own paper; he really had to be something of a chemist in order to be successful.

the Kenwood addition. Mr. Train died here in 1899.

Two children were born to Phoebe and Edgar Train, Ada, later Mrs. Fisk, who was killed in an automobile accident in Salem, Oregon, in 1927, and Percy, who is field representative for the National Museum, Washington, D. C. under the Department of U. S. Geological Survey. At present he is in Lovelocks, Nevada, busy excavating cave dwellings, said to be the homes of preliterate Americans.

Mrs. Train is a cheerful old body, living alone in her little home in Kenwood where she has, carefully stored away, thousands of mementoes of her early womanhood, when she and her husband, gay members of Helena's young married set, danced the schottische and the polka with fifty other couples, their club, which met every two weeks; pictures of Montana notables who came to the Train studio when they wanted a good photograph taken; snap-shots of their children at various ages, of herself and her husband in the happy, gypsy days of their moving gallery; other well posed group pictures taken in their home and gallery on Cutler Street; conventional marriage pictures, in which he, a very much bearded young man of serious mein, sits while she stands, sweetly demure, with her hand on his shoulder. Mrs. Train looks at them all, laughing a little, but tenderly withal, while she tells you little stories of this one or that one. She is a very lively old lady, too, doing her

own house work, though she is over 82 years old. She urges tea on her callers, of whom she has a good many, sons and daughters and grandchildren of all her old friends, and tells them what Helena was like when she was a young woman, reads them bits from Percy's latest letters, all of which begin: "Dear Old Timer", and after they have gone she carefully puts all her little things back where they belong, in this package or that one, all properly labeled, "for Percy", "for Myrtle", "for Alice", for, as she says, a very old lady living alone has no one to tell what disposition she wants made of her little remembrances.

One, she says, cannot expect, or want, to live forever. She says it calmly, unafraid. The pioneering spirit that has carried her through so many fearful moments will not desert her in the last, great experience.

PART II

Electa Bryan-Plummer

With colors flying and her guns answering the noisy salute of those from ashore, the Emilie,¹ Captain Joseph LaBarge, swept into the St. Joseph wharf. It was the middle of May, 1862, and the Emilie, a new side-wheeler of 400 tons, drawing about 3½ feet of water, was bound for Fort Benton, at the head of navigation on the Missouri. Her passengers, a heterogeneous group, crowded the rail, where they added to the holiday effect by cheering and waving, and firing off their shooting irons, one-shot derringers, for the most part, that would probably be replaced by the husky six-gun before many of these men saw civilization again.

As soon as the gang plank was run out the passengers hastened ashore where they sauntered up and down and watched the hustle and bustle of the crew and levee stevedores who struggled with the freight. Dapper young men in

1. Named for Captain LaBarge's daughter. The LaBarges this year started a company, LaBarge, Harkness & Jaecard, to oppose the American Fur Company. Their boats were the first to reach Fort Benton. Hiram Chittenden, Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri (2 Vols., New York, Harpers, 1903) Vol. 1, p. 241. The Emilie left St. Louis May 14, 1862. It left St. Joseph May 18. J.A.Vail, Letter, Executive Documents, (Third Session, 37th Congress, 1862 - 1863) Vol. 2, pp. 325 et seq. James Harkness, Diary, Contributions, Historical Society of Montana (9 Vols., Helena, Independent Publishing Company, 1876 - 1902) Vol. 2, p. 343.

high hats and frock coats idled along, their sticks swinging, stopping to chat now and then with one or another of their traveling companions; others escorted ladies in slender-waisted, puff-sleeved gowns, bending above them with attentive solicitude. Ruined gentlemen of southern sympathies, enroute to new opportunities, talked over possibilities of the gold fields with roughly dressed, lean-faced men, argonauts of many rushes. Here and there engages of the fur companies, picturesque in hunting dress, endeavored to aid the crew, their celebration of the night before giving them an unnatural distaste for too great movement. A delegation of Indian braves, returning from a visit to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, watched activities with feigned indifference, incongruous in a combination of² tribal and white man's dress.

At the first bell they all returned to the boat, which, after a repetition of the salutes of arrival, swung off upstream on its long journey to the headwaters.

Out of hearing of the St. Joseph water front, the musketry died down; the boat deck was put in order for the trip, the bales of goods strewn about in disorderly heaps were carefully stowed away, and the boat soon took on the orderly appearance it would keep to the next point of

2. Chittenden, op.cit., Vol. 1, p. 127 et passim.

loading and unloading. New passengers, of which there were several, were assigned quarters and after making a survey of the boat seemed quite as much at home as any of the earlier guests.

Among the new arrivals was a group that attracted a good deal of attention, two little girls, perhaps four and five years old, their father and mother, alert, wholesome looking young parents, and a pretty brown-haired miss of perhaps nineteen. They were Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Vail, their two children, and Miss Eleeta Bryan, sister of Mrs. Vail. Vail had been hired by Henry W. Reed,³ Agent of the Blackfeet, to manage the government farm maintained on Sun river, for the instruction of its Indian wards in farming, and they were on their way to that place. The farm would be far from any settlement, and Mrs. Vail's young sister was going along to be company for them, and for a little adventure for herself.

There were not many women on board, and the eyes of many of the young men strayed often to these fresh-faced, clear-eyed young women. They were glad when Captain LaBarge introduced the newcomers. The informality of boat life

3. The Vails were from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where the Rev. Henry Reed had been pastor of their church. Francis M. Thompson, "Reminiscence of Three Score Years", Massachusetts Magazine, Ed. Thomas Franklin Waters, (6 Vols., Ipswich, Mass., 1912) Vol. 6, p. 161.

encouraged friendliness, and soon there was much promenading on the deck, and many visits to the pilot house, where, for hours at a time, if the channel were clear for that long, the pilot told them tall tales of adventures on this very stretch of river, pointed out places where the Indians had given them a bad brush, the very last trip up, a crossing where a buffalo herd had held them back for hours, an Indian grave up there in the trees on the bluff, where the body, wrapped in tribal finery, lay open to the air that the spirit might find easy escape to the Sand Hills. They⁴ listened open eyed, the young men as well as the girl.

Whenever necessary the boat would put in at some wood-yard, and the cabin passengers watched 40 or 50 roustabouts, "dressed in fancy shirts of rainbow hue, destined ere long to charm the eye of many a squaw",⁵ file off to load "horse wood", cotton wood from which the bark had been peeled,⁶ the fine inner shreds being used for horse feed. While this work was going on the valorous would-be-hunters among the cabin passengers would pop off with revolvers and rifles at every conceivable mark.

4. Chittenden, op.cit., Vol. 1, p. 130.

5. Quoted from Thompson, op.cit., Vol. 5, p. 151.

6. Chittenden, op.cit.: "Traders at various posts were under standing orders to gather up the 'horse wood' in their vicinity and pile it on the bank of the river, where it could be reached by boats." p. 50.

6. (Cont'd. from page 4)

Sometimes the cost of wooding was excessive. If it had to be brought long distances, through hostile Indian country, the price was high. But it was something the boat could not get along without, and expensive or cheap, the Captain had to buy it. The situation was somewhat like that of early days on the Ohio, when wild cat money was used as currency, much of which was worthless. A steamboat captain seeing a fine lot of wood on the river bank, hailed the proprietor:

"Is that wood for sale?"

"Yes."

"How much a cord?"

"What ye payin' in?"

"Oh, Gallipolis money!"

"Then it's cord for cord!"

The journey was long and monotonous and while the officers were kept alert and active in getting the boat up the troublesome stream, the passengers whiled away the time in any way their initiative and ingenuity and the limitations of the boat suggested. Games of all kinds were played, in addition to the night-long poker sessions in the bar; the young men shot at ducks and geese from the fore-castle or the boiler deck, each hoping that his fine aim had been noted by the ladies; occasional game animals, deer, buffalo, elk, enlivened the interest momentarily; groups of Indians, moving along the bank, always caused a flutter among the passengers; at certain of the bends where the river swept back on itself, making narrow-necked peninsulas, many of them, seeking a foretaste of adventure, got off the boat for a ramble, meeting the boat on the other side of the bend.⁷ The engagés of the boat staged fist bouts to determine the physical prowess of their members;⁸ these contests were exhibitions put on before the assembled passengers and crew, and there was no peace among the engagés and roustabouts until the reputation of one or another was established. During these bloody affairs Electa Bryan sought the far side of the deck or joined the older women

7. Harkness, op.cit., p. 345.

8. Chittenden, op.cit., p. 129.

in the cabins where they shuddered delicately at the successive roars of disappointment and elation that marked the progress of the fight.

The tedium of the journey was pleasantly broken at ⁹Fort Randall where the boat party was welcomed by a garrison of Iowa volunteers; after a visit to the post, conducted by pleasant young officers, the ladies returned to the boat which then crossed to the Nebraska side of the river and tied up for the night near an encampment of 100 lodges of Sioux. ¹⁰ Here Eleeta and Mrs. Vail were convulsed with laughter at the behavior of one especially ugly old chief, who, permitted on board, seated himself in a chair before a mirror where he remained for an hour, silently ¹¹admiring his fine, manly beauty. Later they went with a party to the Indian camp where they watched little Indian boys and girls dance to the music of a jews harp, played ¹²by Francis Thompson, of the Emilie party.

The next morning the boat got off and there was nothing to break the monotony of slowly steaming up-stream, avoiding newly formed bars, and cautiously picking out a channel. Here they encountered severe wind storms and were

9. Francis Thompson, op.cit., Vol. 5, p. 152.

10. Thompson, loc.cit.

11. Mrs. Wm. Whaley, Interview. An incident from the trip her mother made up the Missouri.

12. Thompson, op.cit., Vol. 5, p. 153.

often forced to tie up at the bank to escape the danger of
 being wrecked.¹³ Frequently the boat was stranded on a
 sandbar for hours and sometimes for whole days.¹⁴ Awakened
 at daybreak by the cry of "buffalo" they dressed hurriedly
 and hastened to the deck. The animals were crossing the
 stream; the water was soon black with them, the babies
 swimming along easily, on the down side of the stream, in
 the protected eddy made by the bodies of their mothers. The
 wheels of the steamer had to be stopped, lest the paddles
 be broken on their horns.¹⁵ There was much excitement on
 board, and firearms were cracking on all sides. Seven
 animals were killed, four of the carcasses being hoisted on
 board for meat. Eagerly the guests waited for dinner, to
 try buffalo meat, cooked on the hunt, so to speak.

At Fort Berthold the Emilie overtook the Spread Eagle
 and her consort, the Key West, boats of the American Fur
 Company, competitors of the LaBarge Company. That evening
 as all three boats lay together at the Fort Berthold levee,
 there was much visiting back and forth by crew and

13. Harkness, op.cit., pp. 344-345.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Thompson, op.cit., Vol. 5, p. 155.

17 passengers. The Rev. Mr. Reed, a passenger on the Spread Eagle, visited the Vails and learned that Miss Bryan and Mrs. Vail were enjoying the trip immensely. The ladies of the Emilie were eager and curious to meet Mrs. Culbertson, the Blackfoot wife of a partner of the American Fur Company, who was with her husband on the Spread Eagle. 18 They found her a well-poised woman, a dominating personality, 19 of striking appearance, obviously proud of her pure Indian blood. She was a romantic figure to young Electa Bryan, and she and her husband, a tall gentleman of commanding personality, were, for days, the subject of her sentimental imaginings.

The next morning the Spread Eagle was the first boat to get under weigh; it was closely followed by the Emilie, the Key West being the last to get started. A few miles

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17. Thompson, op.cit., Vol. 5, p. 156. But according to Harkness, op.cit., the Emilie reached Fort Berthold in the morning and found the Spread Eagle there: "At 7 A.M. Fort Berthold is in plain view, and a steamboat, which creates lively interest among us all. Arrived at Fort Berthold an hour later and met a number of acquaintances.....The steamer, Spread Eagle, left at 10:30 A.M., the Emilie at 11. Passed several lodges above the fort, and the Key West about 3 P.M.The steamer Spread Eagle has come up and the Key West is in sight." It would seem from this that the boats did not "lay together" that night, and that the Key West got off ahead of the Emilie. The Emilie must have passed the Spread Eagle but Harkness doesn't mention it.
18. Lieutenant James H. Bradley, "Affairs at Fort Benton", Contributions to Montana Historical Society, Vol.3, p.281.
19. Miss Roberts, Interview. Miss Roberts is a granddaughter of Mrs. Culbertson's.

above Fort Berthold the Emilie passed the Spread Eagle but immediately after ran aground. The crew worked feverishly to get the boat afloat for they saw the prospects of a thrilling race with the boat of their chief competitors. Their efforts soon freed the Emilie, which then put on all speed and soon came alongside the Spread Eagle for a mile or so. The decks of both boats were crowded now with cheering partisans. A bend in the river favored the Spread Eagle, momentarily, and she forged ahead. The Emilie came up but to prevent her getting ahead the Spread Eagle zigzagged back and forth across the channel. Suddenly another channel, a short cut, opened on the Emilie's side of the river, and the pilot put her into it. Baily of the Spread Eagle, desperate at losing the race at this stage, turned the nose of the Spread Eagle against the Emilie and rammed her dangerously, ²⁰ nearly crowding her ashore. Curses and threats flew across the intervening space, and the Spread

20. Chittenden, op.cit., Vol. 2, pp. 287-290: "He (LaBarge) instantly called out to Bailey, Spread Eagle pilot, to stop his engines and drop his boat back or he would put a bullet through him. The passengers likewise became thoroughly aroused, and some got arms and threatened to use them if the Spread Eagle did not withdraw. The threats proved effective. The Spread Eagle fell to the rear and was seen no more on the voyage." Reports were rife that the Emilie would be sunk before she reached Fort Benton. Harkness, op.cit., p. 347.

Eagle slowly gave way, the Emilie shooting ahead, the position she held during the remainder of the journey, although the last two days were spent in helping the Shreveport, her sister boat which had started the trip in April, up the series of rapids just below Fort Benton.²¹

At the mouth of the Milk river, Mr. Galpin, a member of the LaBarge company, with several men, left the Emilie to go overland to Fort Benton.²² The object of the trip was to gather horses from the Indians for sale to the passengers who intended to proceed on to the mines. Electa Bryan, remembering the hundreds of ugly Sioux they had left at Fort Pierre, felt troubled at seeing the men start off alone. She thought them foolishly brave, men of superior courage, that they could turn their backs on the comforts of the boat to enter the dangers her vivid imagination pictured.

Above the Milk river they ran into more buffalo, and Miss Bryan watched Francis Thompson shoot one. It drifted down the river, and it seemed as if Mr. Thompson must lose his game. But almost before the boat reached the bank an Indian on board made a splendid leap ashore, ran along the stream for a distance, plunged in and was

21. Chittenden, loc.cit.

22. Harkness, op.cit., p. 348.

soon aboard the floating carcass which he lashed to some
²³
 overhanging bushes. It was a startling exhibition of
 grace and skill, and called forth much praise. The boat
 later dropped back down stream and picked up the Indian and
 the buffalo.

They had now reached the swiftest and most difficult
 part of the stream, a long stretch of rapids, and for half
 an hour at a time the boat hardly gained a foot.
²⁴ Finally
 by the free use of tar and rosin under her boilers, they
 succeeded in passing her over the crest of the fall, a
 victory cheered by all on board. Ten miles above they tied
 up for the night. Here about fifty of the passengers went
 ashore, after dinner, and climbed to the top of the bluff,
 from which the river looked like a narrow canal.

The next morning the smoke of the Shreveport was
 visible above a bend in the river. There was much firing
 of cannon and shooting off of pocket weapons, and when the
 two boats met at the bottom of the third rapids a general
 celebration was held. More powder was exploded, there
 was long, loud cheering and much noise in general. They
 lay to and visited for an hour, while the crews made
 preparations for climbing the rapids. This was a feat in

23. Thompson, op.cit., Vol. 5, p. 153.

24. Harkness, loc.cit.

steamboat maneuvering and called for the greatest skill and ability to make the most of every little advantage. Captain Joseph LaBarge took the wheel. Two hundred men, almost all the passengers on both boats, went ashore to lighten the loads. The fires under the Emilie's boilers were fed with pitch and rosin until the steam gauge mounted dangerously. The boat moved slowly ahead, seemingly encouraged by the cheers of those on shore, until she reached the swiftest part of the rapids, when she wavered a bit, and then fell back. The shore party signalled the pilot to work the boat over toward them and throw out a line. This was done and cabin passengers and engagés alike tugged manfully and as cheerfully as any French Canadian voyageur had ever done, cordelling²⁵ the Emilie over the crest of the rapids into the still deep water above, where she rested. There she dropped anchor, and attaching a cable to a keg, let it float down to the Shreveport, which was then lifted up over the rapids by the power of the Emilie's²⁶ "nigger".

²⁷
At Dead Man's rapids and the last rapids before

25. Thompson, op.cit., Vol. 5, p. 159. Harkness, op.cit., does not mention this. He says they got up with little trouble. Perhaps this was because the Emilie was his company's boat.

26. Hoisting engine.

27. Thompson, op.cit. Harkness, op.cit., p. 349, calls these rapids "Drowned Men's Rapids."

reaching Fort Benton the same methods were used, a sorry lot of first class passengers hurrying back to their cabins where they tried, more or less successfully, to get the river mud off their clothes before the boat should put in at the Fort Benton levee. Before they reached the town a big delegation of Indians, in gorgeous trappings, riding superbly on superb horses, rode along the bank in greeting. Shouting, waving, and shooting in the air, they put on an exhibition of horsemanship that brought cries of admiration from the boat parties. Thus escorted, the ²⁸Emilie, with an extra burst of speed, swept up to the levee, closely followed by the Shreveport, the first boats of the season. After an hour's visit there they moved on up the river to the site where it had been decided Fort Campbell should be built, and unloaded cargo.

And the town they had striven so laborously to reach? A raw little western settlement just venturing to extend ²⁹itself beyond the adobe walls of the old fur trading post. Inside these walls, already crumbling, the boat party found the officers of the American Fur Company cautiously hospitable, a becoming attitude, since they were meeting

28. Thompson, op.cit., Vol. 5, p. 160. Harkness does not mention such a delegation.

29. Bradley, op.cit., p. 281: the first house outside the walls was built during the summer of 1862.

their newest competitors whose boat was the first one of the season. The Indians agreed to bring in furs to trade, and Little Dog promised to bring his people to the new post.

The old post seemed a poor, crowded little place after the long journey they had made to reach it, and the women of the party were rather abashed at the unsanitary smell that pervaded the place. Some rather pretty Indian women in bright trade calico drew admiring glances but others, drowsing before doorways in greasy skin dresses, caused genteel noses to go up disdainfully, and dainty skirts to be carefully pulled aside. The visitors were glad to be outside again; many stopped at the Indian village where they poked about, timidly adventurous; their little cries of surprise at the designs on the lodges, and their elegant mannerisms caused a great deal of amusement, well-hidden, however, under a mask of indifference. The visitors were glad to be back on the boat for the night, crowded though their quarters had seemed.

30

30. Dr. Hoyt, President of the University of St. Louis, and his wife, had come up on the *Emilie* for his health. Afterward he wrote a news story of his experiences for the *St. Louis Democrat*: "Not a livery stable in this city which is not a more desirable place to live in than Fort Benton, Fort Union, or Fort Berthold." Quoted in *Massachusetts Magazine*, *op.cit.*

The Vails probably waited in Fort Benton for the arrival of Agent Reed, on the Spread Eagle, which came in to the levee, June 20,³¹ three days after the Emilie. Eleeta Bryan and her sister bid goodbye to their friends on the boat, declining with regret an invitation to accompany a party planning to make a trip to the Great Falls of the Missouri while the Shreveport was discharging its cargo and taking on another.

They were all eager to see their new home, mental pictures of which had shrunk considerably since they had left Iowa.

But they were more agreeably surprised than otherwise when they saw the farm buildings, built of hewed cottonwood logs, enclosed in a high palisade.³² They were in need of repair, having been badly neglected, but the Vails saw possibilities in the place. The farm was located in a beautiful valley, where wild game abounded, the buildings themselves standing on the banks of the Sun river, a clear mountain stream, a little above where the trail to the

31. H. W. Reed, Letter, Executive Documents, op.cit., p. 322, gives June 21 as the arrival date.

32. Thompson, op.cit., Vol. 6, p. 36.
Harkness, op.cit., p. 350: "Friday, June 27. Filley returned from the farm" (Sun river where he had gone Tuesday June 24, with Mr. Reed and some of his people) "Farm is under water, and there is no crop of much consequence. House is not fit to live in."

Grasshopper creek diggings crossed it. Vail was glad for this, for his family would not be so lonely, with occasional stages and freight wagons passing within sight of the house. The girls pooh-poohed the idea of loneliness and eagerly bustled about, hanging curtains and arranging the few dainty belongings that they had been able to bring, making the place amazingly homelike. The children with their dearest playthings, created a picture pleasantly homelike to Bixby and young Joe Swift, Vail's helpers on the farm.

The summer passed pleasantly enough, for there was much to do. The farm was stocked with cattle and a few horses,³³ and Vail had 160 acres under cultivation. But the Indians did not come for instruction. Only one, Little Dog, had made any effort at practical farming. His farm, four miles below the Vail's place, was but eight or ten acres in extent, but the work was difficult for an inexperienced man, and he was too far away from the farm to have practical lessons in the work. No one else sought out Vail for help and instruction; the experiment could hardly be considered successful. The crops, too,³⁴ did not come up to

33. Reed. Vail. op.cit.

34. Their choice of crop was poor for this country. They had in 60 acres of corn. Vail. Reed, op.cit. Harkness, op.cit., p. 356: "Crops very poor on account of overflow."

first expectations; first there was too much water, and the fields were under flood three separate times; then when rain was needed, none came. Altogether the fine enthusiasm they had first felt at the project had begun to wear thin.

Shortly after their arrival they had as visitor Francis Thompson, enroute to the mines. He had been on the Emille, and he had an enthusiasm for the country that matched their own. Later Major Culbertson and his Blackfoot wife came to spend the summer at the farm, guests of Mr. Reed. They moved into one of the houses and had their own housekeeping arrangements. They came and went during the whole summer, using the farm for headquarters between trips to their Indian friends and to Benton. But Mrs. Vail and Electa Bryan were grateful for the presence of another woman on the place and the coming and going of the Culbertsons were moments of interest in an otherwise uneventful life. They left the farm to go down the Missouri in a mackinaw early in September,³⁵ and the Vails felt that they had hardly come to know Mrs. Culbertson at all, so spirited, so proudly reserved she seemed to be.

35. Bradley, op.cit., p. 281, gives Sept. 12 as starting date, but Harkness, op.cit., p. 358, says they joined forces for protection from the Indians, somewhere below Fort Union on Sept. 5.

In the fall, reports of Indian depredations began to come to them. Travel over the mines trail had fallen off, too, with the best season practically over. Vail felt that his family should have some sort of protection in case the Indians should become troublesome; moreover he would need some help on the farm, with winter feeding in pros-

³⁶pect. He talked the matter over with his wife, and late in the fall went to Fort Benton to get a man for the post. He brought back two, Henry Plummer and Jack Cleveland, who had assured him, with secret glances of amusement, that ³⁷they knew which was the business end of a gun.

And so Electa Bryan, unsophisticated, a pretty youngster of charm and refinement, came to know Henry Plummer, black-hearted villain, murderer, seducer and libertine. But all this was well hidden behind a polished exterior. Meticulously careful in dress, courtly in manners, he extended himself to make a good impression on this girl, perhaps the first woman ever to attract his attention who did not evince a too ready interest in him.

36. Bixby seems to have left the farm. Reed had gone back to St. Louis. The winter was an open one; very little feeding was necessary.

37. N.P.Langford, Vigilante Days and Ways (New York, McClurg, 1890) p. 67: "Sixty miles from Benton, their horses jaded with travel, the two men stopped at the government farm on Sun river for a few days' rest." Thompson, op.cit., Vol. 6, p. 124, says Vail hired them as is given above.

In the fall, reports of Indian depredations began to come to them. Travel over the mines trail had fallen off, too, with the beat season practically over. Vail felt that his family should have some sort of protection in case the Indians should become troublesome; moreover he would need some help on the farm, with winter feeding in prospect.³⁶ He talked the matter over with his wife, and late in the fall went to Fort Benton to get a man for the post. He brought back two, Henry Plummer and Jack Cleveland, who had assured him, with secret glances of amusement, that they knew which was the business end of a gun.³⁷

And so Electa Bryan, unsophisticated, a pretty youngster of charm and refinement, came to know Henry Plummer, black-hearted villain, murderer, seducer and libertine. But all this was well hidden behind a polished exterior. Meticulously careful in dress, courtly in manners, he extended himself to make a good impression on this girl, perhaps the first woman ever to attract his attention who did not evince a too ready interest in him.

36. Birby seems to have left the farm. Reed had gone back to St. Louis. The winter was an open one; very little feeding was necessary.

37. N.P.Langford, Vigilante Days and Ways (New York, McClurg, 1890) p. 67: "Sixty miles from Benton, their horses jaded with travel, the two men stopped at the government farm on Sun river for a few days' rest." Thompson, op.cit., Vol. 6, p. 124, says Vail hired them as is given above.

But Plummer was persistent. And no doubt the cultured, carefully reared girl, accustomed to the attention of well-bred men of her own class, found the ardor of this suave, polished gentleman of the world rather fascinating. At any rate before long she was letting Plummer go away with the understanding that they would be married in the spring when the Rev. Mr. Reed returned to the farm. Plummer was elated. His explanations of rumors of his past life, that had somehow reached the Vails, had been believed by the girl, and though her brother and sister had warned her against the man, plans for the wedding went forward.

Plummer and Cleveland left for the mining town of Bannack about Christmas time. Historians of the period have interpreted the Plummer of this period as a man sick and ashamed of the life of crime he had led and earnestly desirous of reforming for the sake of a girl whom he loved sincerely;³⁸ if this was true, circumstances were against him. Perhaps he tried; but the presence of Cleveland, partner of past crimes, was a menace, for Cleveland made no effort to conceal his true nature. He talked, too, and whether he actually told anything harmful, Plummer, knowing all he could tell, was uneasy, and would be as long as

38. Langford, op.cit., gives this interpretation, p. 187 et passim.

Cleveland lived. Within three weeks of their arrival in Bannock Plummer, taking advantage of opportunity, shot and fatally wounded Cleveland. He escaped any sort of punishment for this for Cleveland had made many threats which had been overheard. But his death relieved the man, Plummer, but little for now he feared that Cleveland, dying, had told Crawford, the sheriff, at whose shack he had died, the secrets he, Plummer, must have kept. So trouble with Crawford started, ending the middle of March when Crawford, his nerve shot, left the country. On May 24th Plummer³⁹ was elected sheriff of Bannack district.

This story naturally reached the Vails on Sun river and they implored their sister not to marry Plummer. Francis Thompson, who had spent the winter in San Francisco, going overland by way of the BitterRoot, over the moun-⁴⁰tains and down the Columbia, was now at the farm, having stopped there for a visit enroute to Fort Benton where he was going to receive some goods to be shipped to him there and with which he intended to stock a store in Bannack. He had been a good friend of Miss Bryan and the Vail's and Vail and his wife both urged him to advise

39. Old record of election is in Historical Library,
Helena.

40. Thompson, log. cit.

41

Electa against marrying Plummer. This difficult task he undertook, and Electa who loved her brother and sister, and really had no joy in the somewhat strained atmosphere that had resulted from her friendship with Plummer, consented to a plan whereby she would return to her home in Cedar Rapids on one of the boats daily expected in Fort Benton. There Plummer would visit her, and if, in her own home again, surrounded by her own people, her own friends, she found that she really loved the man, the Vails and Thompson would cease all protest and come east for the wedding.

The Vails were delighted. They were very gentle with their little sister; and they prayed for a boat.

42

In a few days Plummer came riding to the ranch to be there when the arrival of the Rev. Mr. Reed would make their wedding possible, according to the plans they had made in the winter; before many days they announced their intention of being married as soon as Mr. Reed came.

43

But the boats were long delayed and finally all hope of seeing the Methodist elder soon, were given up. Plummer

41. Thompson, loc. cit., Vol. 6, p. 159; p. 161.

42. June 2, 1862.

43. No boats reached Fort Benton this year. The Shreveport unloaded some distance below. This with the law suits that came of it, was partly responsible for the failure of the LaBarge company.

pleaded that he must get back to his duties, that their house had been built, was waiting its mistress. He used all the arguments that such circumstances have ever called forth.

The shy Eleeta, so long without the admiration that is youth and beauty's due, found his ardor gratifying. She surrendered to his wishes for an immediate wedding; Father Minatre, from St. Peter's Catholic mission, was called in⁴⁴ and the marriage duly celebrated.

44. Thompson, op.cit., Vol. 6, pp. 116-119.

"On June 20, 1863, all the inmates of the fort (the farm) assembled in the best rooms to witness the marriage by Father Minatre of St. Peter's Mission, of Miss Eleeta Bryan to Mr. Henry Plummer. The pretty bride was neatly gowned in a brown calico dress, and was modest and unassuming in appearance. The dapper groom wore a blue business suit, neatly foxed with buckskin wherever needed, a cotton checked shirt, and a blue tie. The best man was the tall and graceful Joseph Swift, Jr., who wore sheep's gray pants, foxed and patched with buckskin, a pretty red and white sash and a gray flannel shirt, and was under necessity of wearing moccasins, both of which were made for the same foot. Being a leader in Blackfoot fashion he wore no coat. Want of more modest and better material is presumably the reason that the Reverend Father suggested that I act as substitute for bride's maid, but I meekly obeyed, and my mole-skin trousers, neatly foxed in places that come to wear, a black coat and vest, and buffalo skin shoes made up my wedding gear. The ceremony was long and formal. Immediately after the wedding breakfast, buffalo hump, and bread made of cornmeal ground in a handmill, the happy couple left in the government ambulance, drawn by four wild Indian ponies, for Bannack City, the new metropolis. The poor sister, Mrs. Vail was almost broken hearted."

It is impossible to say how long it was before Electa Bryan-Plummer realized the sort of man she had married; probably she never knew to what depths of infamy he had sunk, though she must soon have begun to doubt all the "explanations" he had made in his efforts to account for his past difficulties. Shortly after her marriage her sister and brother, as if they could not bear to leave her alone to her mistake, resigned⁴⁵ the Sun river position and moved to Bannack. The Plummers boarded with them, as did Francis Thompson, now a store keeper in Bannack, and young Joe Swift, who had become his clerk. It was the same group that had been at the Sun river farm, and had relations between the Plummers been those of a happily married bride and groom, Electa must have been happy to have them near her, though perhaps she would have remained in her own home.

But on September 2, 1863, just ten weeks after their marriage she left for her old home in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, going by stage to Salt Lake City.⁴⁶ Plummer told their neighbors that she was going back to see her parents whom she had not seen for some time; that she found life in the territory lonely, with her sheriff husband away on duty so much of the time. He said that he would join her in the

45. Thompson, op.cit., Vol. 6, p. 123.

46. Thompson, loc.cit.: "I find this entry in my diary: 'Sept. 2, 1863, Mrs. Plummer left by overland stage for the states.' This was the last time I ever saw her."

spring and both would return to Bannack. This was a strange explanation, since the whole town knew that Mrs. Plummer's sister was in Bannack, living in the same house with her. People smiled. It was just the sort of inadequate explanation that a man, about to become a father for the first time, would try to palm off on his too inquisitive friends. And so grew the story that Mrs. Plummer had gone east where she could be with her mother and have the best of medical care before the birth of her child.

Long before the spring, of which Plummer had talked so glibly, his body was swinging by the neck in the bitter cold of a January night. He was hanged in Bannack on January 12, 1864.

Mrs. Plummer did not come back to the Territory in the spring. She never came back. The story that she had given birth to a posthumous son, long a favorite among sentimental westerners, was false. She did not die of a broken heart within convent wall; and she did not return to the Sun river scene to obtain a large sum of Plummer's ill-gotten money buried there.

Sometime after the execution of Henry Plummer, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Vail and their two children quietly departed from Bannack.⁴⁷ They moved to a farm near Vermillion, Dakota Territory, where they lived for many years. After they had been there for some little time, Mrs. Plummer came

to make her home with them, between school sessions, for she had become a school teacher. On January 19, 1874, she married a widower, James Maxwell, whose two little girls needed mothering. The Maxwells had two sons, Vernon, now of West Bend, Iowa, and Clarence, now of Rolfe, Iowa.

She died on May 5, 1912, and is buried in Wakonda, South Dakota.

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47. Mrs. Stafford, Mrs. John Slaterry, Letter to D. Hilger, Librarian Historical Library. This letter was written in 1930. Mrs. Stafford and Mrs. Slaterry were the children Mrs. Plummer mothered when she married Maxwell. She was loath to talk about Montana, and did not do so of her own accord. They speak very highly of her and say she was a good mother to them. They are authorities for the remaining statements in this paper.

PART III

Natowap' Tsis-Tseksin

1

2

Natowap' Tsis-Tseksin¹ was the daughter of Matose-Apiw,²
 chief of the Bloods³ of the North. When she was sixteen
 years old she came with her people to trade at Fort McKenzie,⁴

- 1.a. This name when pronounced by whites sounds as if it were spelled: Na-tan-wis-tik-sa-na and means Medicine Snake Woman. This spelling and meaning is given by Mrs. Frances C. Irwin in a letter to David Hilger, Librarian, Montana Historical Library, Helena. Mrs. Irwin is the daughter of Na-tan-wis-tik-sa-na. She lives in Long Beach, California.
- b. James Willard Schultz, Personal Interview. Mr. Schultz gives the spelling used here. Once married to a Black-foot woman, he is the author of many stories about the tribe. He knows the language well and has been much interested in getting the stories of the tribe as told by its old men.
- 2.a. This name has various spellings and interpretations. It is pronounced almost as if it were spelled Man-is-tok-is and is difficult to translate. Schultz, op.cit., translates it Father of All Children, but admits that that is inadequate. In his Sign Posts of Adventure (Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1926) P. III, Mr. Schultz gives the translation Two Suns.
- b. A. L. Hayden, The Riders of the Plains. (McClurg Co., Chicago, 1910) p. 355. Here the name, followed by the translation "Old Sun" appears among the signatures of Indians of the Blackfeet making treaty No. 7, Sept. 22, 1877, with her Majesty, Queen Victoria, through her representatives, the Mounted Police of Canada.
3. The Bloods were a division of the Blackfeet, as were the Pieguns, and the Blackfeet proper.
4. This post was located on a piece of Missouri river bottom land about 6 miles above the mouth of the Marias on the left, or west bank, 4 miles below the Car-con-je-nez (Crook-on-the-nose), a narrow neck of land between the Teton (The Tanzy of Lewis and Clark) and the Missouri rivers. The post was built by D. D. Mitchell Company employee under Kenneth McKenzie, King of the Upper Missouri, in 1832, and was probably the greatest initiatory measure the company ever attempted, because of the dangerous and bloodthirsty nature of the Indians who resented, bitterly, the coming of trappers into their

the post maintained by the American Fur Trading Company for carrying on trade with the Blackfeet.

5

There Alexander Culbertson, young clerk at the post,

4. (Cont. from page 1) country. But under tactful management the company prospered in their trade here for ten years, 1842, when a drunken bourgeoisie, F. A. Chardon, and his vicious, brutal clerk, Alexander Harvey, attempted a massacre of a band of Bloods, come to the post to trade. After that, trade fell off, the post was held in a state of seige, and the two men removed the trade goods to a post at the mouth of the Judith for a couple of seasons. Trade did not pick up and the post was later moved back up the river under the management of Alexander Culbertson. Its name was changed to Fort Lewis, in honor of Meriwether Lewis. In 1846 Fort Lewis, timber, lumber, trade goods, and all, was rafted down the Missouri to the present site of Fort Benton. In 1850 it was rebuilt of adobe and named Fort Benton, in honor of Senator Thomas H. Benton, whose ability and influence were largely responsible for doing away with the old factory system, 1796-1822, in the fur trade, and who, retained as counsel for the American Fur Company, had saved their charter in their frequent squabbles with the government over smuggled liquor. Material for this note is from scattered references in: Hiram Chittenden, History of the American Fur Trade in the Far West, (3 Vols., New York, Harper, 1902), Vol. 1, pp. 15; 347, et. seq.; Lieutenant James H. Bradley, "Affairs at Fort Benton", Contributions, Historical Society of Montana, (9 Vols., Independent Publishing Company, Helena, 1876-1902), Vol. 3, p. 201, et passim; Maximilian, Maximilian's Travels in North America, 3 Vols., in Thwaites, R. G., Early Western Travels, 1748-1846, (32 Vols., Cleveland, Ohio, 1904-1907), Vol. 23, pp. 92-94.
5. Alexander Culbertson at this time must have been in his late twenties, or early thirties. He was born in Chambersberg, Pennsylvania, May, 1809. In 1826 he went with his uncle, John Culbertson, to Florida. He entered the service of the American Fur Company in 1829, coming up to Fort McKenzie in 1833, when Mitchell brought the party of Maximilian Prince of Weid, Neuweid, Prussia, up from Fort Union in the Flora. Maximilian was a naturalist and a scientist who, following an exploration

saw her and, smitten by her lithe beauty, her evident intelligence and individuality, sought opportunities to talk with her. But girls of the Blackfeet tribes were always closely chaperoned by their mothers or other female relatives, and several months passed before Culbertson managed to get speech with Natowap' Tsis Tsaksin Ahki, beyond hearing of her guardians.

Perhaps this first sight of this girl he desired for wife came when she, bent almost double under a pack of robes which her nimble fingers had helped to dress, carried into the trade room her father's winter take of robes and furs. Had she been the daughter of a common member of the tribe perhaps Culbertson would that night have joined other favored young men of the post when they went to visit at the Indian camp and on some of the evenings that followed there

5. (Cont. from page 2) trip through South America, had come up the Missouri, on the Yellowstone to Fort Pierre and from there on the Assiniboine, intending to spend the winter in the Rocky Mountains taking specimens. Maximilian, op.cit., Vols. 22-23.
6. An Indian buck never carried anything. To do so was below the dignity of even the lowliest. This was squaws' work. When an Indian came to trade he strode into the 'Indian room' in the most dignified and haughty manner. Behind him struggled his women, each bent under a load of a dozen or more robes. These were passed through the wicket one at a time and the Indian called out what he wanted, guns, ammunition, saddle. The goods for the household, coffee, sugar, tea, the squaws took charge of, tying the few cupfuls their finest robes brought, in their skin dresses.

must have been a chance to take part in the Assiniboine dances, for Na-ta-wis-ta, the abbreviated form of her name used by family and friends, must have been a lively and spirited young woman, who, freed of the weight of her father's tribal position would, I doubt not, lead a white man on as charmingly, and with as much enjoyment as any of her white sisters. They would have danced; she would have caught him in her robe, and the next day she would have come with her mother to the post, and between giggles and asides to each other, they would have selected her presents captivating the heart of the young man more than ever.
7

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7. This dance is described by Schultz, My Life As An Indian, (New York, 1906) as it was danced when he took part in it, many years later, at Fort Benton: "In this Assiniboine dance, only young, unmarried men and women participate. Their elders, their parents and relatives, beat the drum and sing the dance song, which is certainly a lively one, and of rather an abandoned nature. The women sit on one side of the lodge, the men on the other. The song begins, everyone joining in. The dancers arise, facing each other, rising on their tip toes, and then sinking so as to bend the knees. Thus they advance and meet, then retreat, again advance and retreat a number of times, all singing, all smiling, and looking coquettishly into each others' eyes. Thus the dance continues, perhaps for several hours, with frequent pauses to rest, or maybe to feast and smoke. But all the fun comes in toward the close of the festivities; the lines of men and women have advanced; suddenly a girl raises her robe or toga, casts it over her own and the head of the youth of her choice, and gives him a hearty kiss. The spectators shout with laughter, the drums are beaten louder than ever, the song increasing in

But Na-ta-wis-ta was the daughter of the great Matose-⁸
 Apiw, head chief of the North Blackfeet, and his only child.
 As such, none of this casual social life was permitted her.
 However, the most rigid guardian could not prevent their
 exchanging glances, glances which must have told each other
 much for when Culbertson, after months of waiting, found her
 alone just outside the trade room door, he asked her, at
 once, if she could care enough for him to become his woman.
 Na-ta-wis-ta replied shyly that she had long been hoping that
 he would ask her parents to give her to him.

This was the custom among the Blackfeet; the marriage
 of a daughter was arranged by her father, sometimes that of

7. (Cont. from page 4) intensity. The lines retreat, the
 favored youth looking very much embarrassed, and all
 take their seats. For this kiss payment must be made
 on the morrow. If the young man thinks a good deal
 of the girl, he may present her with one or two horses;
 he must give her something, if only a copper bracelet
 or a string of beads. I believe that I was an 'easy
 mark' for those lively, and I fear, mercenary maidens
 for I was captured with the toga and kissed more
 than anyone else. And the next morning there would
 be three or four of them at the trading post with
 their mothers; and one must have numerous yards of
 bright prints; another some bright trade cloth and
 beads; still another a blanket. They broke me but
 still I would join in when another dance was given."
 p. 44-45.

8. Irwin, op.cit. Little Dog is called her brother in the
 Fort Benton Journal, (Manuscript, Historical Library,
 Helena) but Mrs. Irwin says she was an only child, two
 brothers having died in their early childhood. Little
 Dog, she says, was a first cousin. Chief Grey Eyes and
 Eagle Ribs (Pitah-pekis) were also related to her, as
 was Red Crow (Meeasto). The last two were signers
 of the Blackfeet Treaty No. 7, Sept. 22, 1877. Haydon,
loc.cit.

a son, too. If the suitor was accepted the bride-to-be must carry food to her future husband three times a day from the time the arrangements were made until the marriage. Sometimes this offering was also made to the young man's mother. The whole proceeding was trying to a young, self-effacing Blackfoot Indian maiden for these trips to the lodge of her husband-to-be were a sort of engagement announcement and from that time on she was the subject of the wit and jibes of her friends. Later her parents gave a big feast to which only the family of the groom were invited; afterward the two young people set up housekeeping in a fine new lodge, the bride's, furnished with her fine robes, blankets, parfleches, backrests, and cooking utensils. Her dowry was in horses, as many as her father wished to give, but twice this number were returned to him by the groom.⁹

Therefore, Na-ta-wis-ta's answer was a becoming one and young Culbertson lost no time in making the next step. He returned to his office and immediately sent an engag  to bring her parents in. They soon appeared. After they

9. Walter McClintock, Old Indian Trails, (Houghton, Mifflin Co., Boston, New York, 1923), p. 80. George Bird Grinnell, Blackfoot Lodge Tales, (Scribners, New York, 1892), pp. 212-214. All Indian marriages did not follow this form. There were elopements of the unconventional, as there is among white people.

had smoked, he asked them for their daughter. 'She is still too young to have a man,' the mother quickly replied. The father was thoughtful. After a time, speaking with slow deliberation, he said, 'I am going to make you prove that you are worthy of my daughter. At this time, this moon, of next summer, if you are still without a woman, that will be evidence that you love her, and she shall be your woman.'

In vain did Culbertson plead that he and the girl loved one another and wished to become husband and wife at once. Old Matose-Apiw would not be moved. 'I am not of two minds, two tongues,' he said. 'I have told you the condition upon which you may have my daughter, and I keep¹⁰ my word.'

A most unusual attitude for an Indian father to take! The Blackfeet have an expression, "mat-ah-kwi- tam-ap-i-¹¹ ni-po-ke-mi-o-sin", not found (is) happiness without woman, which accounts, in part, for their acceptance of white husbands for their daughters and sisters, though they must have seen, on all hands, unhappy results of such unions. The more thoughtful distrusted the white man, even at this early date, and the many Indian women and half-breed children kicked about the fur trading posts were indica-

10. Schultz, Sign Posts of Adventure, p. 111.

11. James Willard Schultz, My Life As An Indian, p. 99.

tions that their distrust was not without reason. Matose-Apiw, wealthy in horses and furs, had no need to sell his daughter for a few scraps of trade cloth, a few drinks of bad whiskey, a few papers of vermilion.

Having finished their trading the Bloods moved out upon the plains, but during the following year kept in rather closer touch with affairs at Fort McKenzie, and the girl's parents were pleased that Culbertson took no woman but awaited the fulfillment of their promise to him. In the meantime they prepared the girl's trousseau. "Two Suns (Schultz' translation of the name of Na-ta-wis-ta's father) was a very powerful, proud, and very wealthy chief. He ordered his wives and female relatives to prepare for the girl an outfit, a bridal trousseau as one may say, such as no girl of the plains had ever had before; numerous gowns of soft buckskin, bead embroidered, quill embroidered, strung with elk tusches; moccasins of dainty shape and brilliant embroidery; snow white buckskin leggings; a large new lodge, completely fitted with painted lining, willow back rests for the ends of the couches; a new woman's saddle, with gorgeous crupper and breast band; 14 new pack saddles for the 14 snow white horses that were to be her gift to her white man; and last, many new, brightly painted parfleches, filled with pemmican, choice dried meats and dried berries, for a feast for the engageds of the fort and their women.

"As the appointed time drew near, a messenger from the tribe arrived at the fort with word that four days hence, the bridal party would arrive. The party proved to be the whole Kaina tribe, men, women, and children, all of them in their beautiful ceremonial clothes, Sun priests, chiefs, warriors in the lead, riding painted, feathered horses singing a mighty song of friendly greeting to the time of a hundred drums. Behind them, escorted by her relatives, was beautifully gowned Natowap' Tsis-Tseksin Ahki upon a coal-black, fast buffalo horse, and closely followed by the fourteen white pack-horses loaded with her belongings; and after them the long caravan of the tribe, 4000 strong. In the fort cannon boomed, flags fluttered, and in front of the wide and open gate stood Culbertson and his engages, dressed, all of them, in the best they had. They escorted the Sun priests, chiefs, and the bride and her relatives into the wide court, and Culbertson assisted the girl to dismount. She falteringly told him that the black buffalo runner and the fourteen white horses were her gift to him. He told her that he had gifts for her and for her parents, and at that the engages brought from the trade room four guns, a keg of powder and sack of balls, many blankets, much tobacco, and other things for the father and mother, and made glad their hearts. Then, while the engages and their women feasted the party, Culbertson escorted Na-ta-wis-ta to his office,

his living quarters, and she cried when she saw all that he there had for her; beautiful shawls; gown lengths of silk, of wool, of cotton; earrings, necklace, and bracelets of gold. There was also a newly made gown of red silk, and an engage's woman waiting to put it and more intimate things upon her. Culbertson stepped outside while this was being done; and then she appeared in all her finery, and he proudly escorted her to the great feast that he was giving in her honor. And so began a happy union that lasted until she died, many years later, when on a visit to her Kaina relatives."¹²

There was no wedding ceremony in the sense that white people use this term. Na-ta-wis-ta moved into Culbertson's quarters and the married life began.¹³

The young couple were happy. Culbertson was a personable young man, and his wife, shyly eager to learn white ways, found him kind and considerate. They made an attractive looking couple; Culbertson was tall, of commanding presence, with frank, open countenance and alert, clear eyes; Na-ta-wis-ta was slender; she had fine dark eyes, sharply

12. Schultz, Sign Posts to Adventure, pp. 112-117.

13. The date of this union is not given. I judge it to be not earlier than 1839; in 1843 the Culbertsons, en-route to Fort John, the A.F.C. post on the Laramie, were joined by the Audubon party. According to Audubon they had one child in arms. John J. Audubon, "Missouri River Journals," Audubon and His Journals, ed. by R. M. Audubon (2 Vols. New York and London, 1899), Vol. 2, p. 163.

14
 alert, in a face keen, alive, with the interest of living.
 She loved her husband. And there must have been unusual
 qualities in this young man, unusual to the time and place,
 for honesty and loyalty where women were concerned. Indian
 women. Other white traders seem to have had their women as
 a matter of convenience, to indulge themselves, to make life
 at a wretchedly isolated post a bit more endurable, to look
 after their physical well-being, to keep in well with their
 Indian fur trappers. When they left the Indian country
 there was no longer need for their Indian women and they
 left them with as little compunction, apparently, as they
 would have felt at leaving behind a dog, that, valuable as
 he was in the country, would be a nuisance in the city.
 Nothing of this attitude seems to have been present in the
 Culbertson marriage. He seems to have held her in honor
 and love; she was his wife, a relationship that prevailed
 as long as they both lived. It was a custom among the
 Indians for the chiefs to have as many women as they could
 afford, and many white men, for license, or convenience, or
 15
 diplomacy adopted this custom; in many cases it was
 probably the easy way out of a difficulty. But Culbertson
 had but one wife, Na-ta-wis-ta.

14. My own interpretation of a photograph of them which is
 now in the Historical Library, Helena.

15. James Bridger, Johnny Grant.

Their manage, too, seems to have been based on different principles. When he went places, to Fort Union to take down the spring returns, on a buffalo hunt, to Shonkin¹⁶ Creek to look after the boat-building, on trading expeditions to the Indians, to the St. Louis headquarters, to Washington to lobby for an Indian appropriation bill, east to visit his family, wherever duty or pleasure called him his wife seems to have gone, too. There are several reasons why this should have been true with a woman of Mrs. Culbertson's caliber, intelligent, eager to see and do things, quick to learn, active. She was an Indian woman used to the hardships of trail and wigwam. Travel difficulties that would have overcome a white woman were commonplaces to her. Methods of transportation were slow and distances great. A little run down to Fort Union with the returns meant a journey of over five hundred miles, one way, and the return with the trade goods for the next year was apt to be extremely slow and arduous, since by that time the spring rise, on which they had made the trip down the Missouri in such quick time, would be gone, the river would be shallow, necessitating long stretches of cordelling¹⁷ by the mangeur

16. A corruption of Chantier, the French word for shipyard.

17. "A long line was attached to the top of a high mast which stood a little forward of the center of the boat, and was drawn by 20-40 men strung along the shore. The reason for attaching it to the mast was that it might swing clear of the bushes on the bank." Chittenden, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 33.

18

de lards, and frequent portages, which, sometimes slowed
the travelers down to a few miles a day.¹⁹

A trader in these early days was ubiquitous, and if he did not take his family with him on his numerous trips he was not likely to see much of them. Then, too, life at the post must have been quite tame for a woman of Mrs. Culbertson's type; it had none of the movement and excitement of the trail, and except on rare occasions when there were famous guests to entertain, or danger from Indian attacks threatened, life there must have been quite humdrum and irksome. All these conditions, therefore, united to give the Culbertsons real companionship, so rare in these early marriages between white and Indian.

If the Culbertsons were married in the summer of 1839,

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18. The term meant pork eater and was given in contempt for the men, usually Canadian French, who cheerfully did this beastly work for wretched wages and lived on impossible food, entirely on meat, when it could be shot, but if that were scarce, on lyed corn. Chittenden, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 58.
19. In 1846 it took Charles Larpenteur, clerk of the A.F.C., 70 days to make the trip; his men had to make a channel by carrying the rocks from the bed of the stream, in especially shallow places, and damming up what little water there was. Even then they had practically to lift the boats up these places and portage the goods over. And then, after such stupendous labor, they put the rocks all back again, to detain as much as possible, an opposition trader who was following them. Charles Larpenteur, Forty Years a Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri, ed. Elliot Cones (2 vol. New York, Harper, 1898), Vol. 2, pp. 237-242. Maximilian's party with Mitchell in the Flora did it in 34 days. Maximilian, op. cit. Vol. 23, p. 89.

Na-ta-wis-ta must have visited St. Louis for the first time that year when her husband, in charge of eight mackinaw boats, the last mackinaw fleet ever to be dispatched by the company to St. Louis, took the returns down from Fort Union. The trip down was without event, except that little Na-ta-wis-ta must have been aquiver with happy excitement when at every post the flag was run up and cannon shot off at their approach.²⁰ And in St. Louis I suspect her eyes must almost have dropped out with all the sights she saw.²¹ They put up at the Planters' Hotel, the finest the city offered; and between trips to the shops, where, at first,²² kindly amused wives and daughters of company officials directed her purchases, she must have paraded back and forth before her mirror, trigged out in the latest gowns, and all the fol-de-rols the dress of the period offered.

20. Father Nicholas Point, "Voyage en berge sur le Missouri depuis le fort des piedsnoirs jusqu'à celui des assiniboines", (A journey in a barge on the Missouri from the fort of the Blackfeet, Lewis, to that of the Assiniboines, Union.), Mid-America (January, 1931) gives a good picture of such an experience and the excitement and vivacity it aroused in the crew.

21. Schultz, Interview; Mr. Schultz' uncle was manager or owner of this famous hotel at the time.

22. But if they had fun at her expense she was getting just as much enjoyment out of them; when she returned to the Indian country she entertained the squaws at the post for hours at a time by repeating her experiences in St. Louis, mimicking her white friends, and dramatizing situations.

Her husband spent a good deal of time at the Company's offices, but in the evening there were theaters to attend, and, though it was the summer season, their slender offerings delighted her Indian love of impersonation. There were long dinners to sit patiently through, too, for this year her husband became a partner in the Company.

In the fall of the year they returned to the Indian country, and Na-ta-wis-ta's heart grew too large and her throat ached with the joy of being again among the hills and valleys and on the rivers she loved. Back again in the Fort McKenzie post life flowed in slow easy channels. She gossiped with the women of the engages, relating her exciting experiences in St. Louis, she visited the occasional sick of the post, and went with her husband on trading expeditions helping him both consciously and unconsciously in his understanding of the Indian character, so that he came to have the reputation of being the best Indian trader on the upper Missouri.

Sometime during the next three years in this wilderness post, without doctor or nurse, a baby was born to Na-ta-wis-ta, a black-eyed, black-haired little papoose, whom her father named Nancy, and in the spring of 1843²³ they left

23. Bradley, op. cit., gives the date of this removal as 1841. Audubon, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 163, made the Missouri river trip in 1843, March to November, returning to Fort Pierre with the Culbertsons, who were enroute to the Fort John post.

Fort McKenzie and the country both loved, to go to Fort John on the Laramie river, where from his reputation earned at McKenzie, Culbertson was expected to rehabilitate and reanimate a run-down post and trade.²⁴ Enroute they took to Fort Union the year's returns, twenty-one hundred packs of buffalo and four of beaver, which required five fifty-foot mackinaw boats. They spent the summer at this post, their visit, coinciding with that of John J. Audubon, famous naturalist, who, with his party of four assistants, had come up on the annual boat, Omega, Captain Sire, to collect data concerning the birds and animals of the region.

Mr. Audubon saw a good deal of Mrs. Culbertson, "the Princess" he called her in his journal entries, for she and her husband acted the part of hosts to the old gentleman. He found her "handsome and really courteous and refined in many ways", extremely proud of her pure Indian blood, and kindly considerate to an old man to whose thin-blooded body the late summer mornings of this upland country were un-

24. Culbertson protested against this change but to no avail. He had been so successful with the Blackfoot trade, a difficult field, and one that it had been costly to enter, that he felt the company were making a mistake in changing him. Sierce and Picotte, at Fort Union would not listen to his advice, a mistake as later events proved.

comfortably cool.

25. a. "Mr. Culbertson saw that this dark cramped room would be too small to work in and told me that tomorrow he would remove us to a larger, quieter and better one. I was glad to hear this as it would have been very difficult to draw, write, or work in; and yet it is the very room where the Prince de Neuweid resided for two months, with secretary and bird preserver." Audubon, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 34.

b. "We had retired for the night; but an invitation was sent us to join the party in the dining room... We all got up, and in a short time were amid the beau monde of these parts. Several squaws, attired in their best were present, with all the engage clerks, etc. Mr. Culbertson played the fiddle very fairly; Mr. Guepe the claiionette, and Mr. Chouteau the drum, as if brought up in the great army of Napoleon. Cotillions and reels were danced with much energy and apparent enjoyment, and the company dispersed about one o'clock." Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 35.

c. "I went on with the portrait of Mr. Culbertson, who is about as bad a sitter as his wife, whose portrait is very successful notwithstanding her extreme restlessness."

.....
"I drew Mr. Culbertson's portrait till he was tired enough; his wife, a pure Indian, is much interested in my work...." Ibid.

d. Mrs. Culbertson, with the help of her husband and others at the post, dressed up in native costume and put on an exhibition that won Audubon's admiration and an exceedingly long entry in his journal under date of July 14: "After dinner we had a curious sight. Squires put on my Indian dress, McKenzie put on Mr. Culbertson's, Mrs. Culbertson put on her own superb dress, and the cook's wife put on one Mrs. Culbertson had given me. Squires (of Audubon's party) and Owen (young McKenzie) were painted in an awful manner by Mrs. C. The ladies had their hair loose and flying in the breeze, and then all mounted on horses with Indian saddles and trappings. Mrs. C. and her maid rode astride, like men, and all rode a furious race, under whip the whole way, for more than a mile on the prairie; and how amazed would have been any European lady, or some of our modern belles who boast their equestrian skill, of seeing the magnificent riding of this Indian princess, for that is Mrs. Culbertson's rank, and her servant. Mr. Culbertson

25. (Cont. from page 17) rode with them, the horses running as if wild with their extraordinary Indian riders, Mrs. Culbertson's magnificent black hair floating like a banner behind her. As to the men, for two others had joined squires and McKenzie, I cannot compare them to anything in the whole creation. They ran like wild creatures of unearthly compound. Hither and thither they dashed, and when the whole party had crossed the ravine below, they saw a fine wolf, and gave the whip to their horses, and though the wolf cut to right and left Owen shot at him with an arrow and missed, but Mr. Culbertson gave it chase, overtook it, his gun flashed and the wolf lay dead. They then ascended the hills and away they went, with our princess and her faithful attendant in the van, and by and by the group returned to the camp, running full speed until they entered the fort, and all this in the intense heat of this July afternoon. Mrs. Culbertson, herself a wonderful rider, possessed of both strength and grace in a marked degree, assured me that Squires was equal to any man in the country as a rider." Ibid., p. 89

e. "I lost the head of my first bull because I forgot to tell Mrs. Culbertson that I wished to save it, and the Princess had its skull broken open to enjoy its brains. Handsome, and really courteous and refined in many ways, I cannot reconcile to myself the fact that she partakes of raw animal food with such evident relish."

Audubon was complaining to Mrs. Culbertson that some half-breed hunters who had promised to get him some specimens had not stirred from the fort. She told him "with scorn" that 'all such no-color fellows' were lazy. Later in the day she herself provided him with some very valuable birds for his collection: "On our return Mrs. Culbertson was good enough to give me six young mallards, which she had caught by swimming after them in the Missouri; she is a most expert and graceful swimmer, besides being capable of remaining under water a long time; all the Blackfoot Indians excel in swimming and take great pride in the accomplishment." Ibid., p. 112.

f. "...I had actually felt cold riding in the wagon (returning from a buffalo hunt), and much enjoyed a breakfast Mrs. Culbertson had kindly provided for me." Ibid., p. 121.

Between efforts at entertaining their guests, the Culbertsons worked at preparations for the removal of their household to the Laramie. Na-ta-wis-ta made new parfleches and filled them with pemmican; she made and embroidered moccasins and clothing for her family, and superintended the dressing of the buffalo hides taken in the hunts staged particularly for Mr. Audubon's entertainment and to get him some good specimens. In this difficult work she was not averse to taking a hand herself. They laced the raw hide to a frame of poles and removed the surplus thickness with a short elk-horn steel-tipped hoe which made an odd, monotonous chuck, chuck, chucking sound as they worked.²⁶ Occasionally some of her Indian friends came to call, and then²⁷ the work was put aside and Mrs. Culbertson in company dress laughed and chatted with her guests, showed them about the apartment and perhaps exhibited the fine stock of porcupine²⁸ quills that Mr. Denig had colored for her. Mr. Culbertson

26. Schultz, My Life As An Indian, p. 172.

27. Audubon, op.cit., p. 123: "... We had an arrival of five squaws, half-breeds, and a gentleman of the same order, who came to see our fort and our ladies. The princess went out to meet them covered with a fine shawl, and the visitors followed her to her room. These ladies spoke both the French and Cree language."

28. Ibid., p. 81: "Indians are not equal to the whites in the art of dyeing porcupine quills: their ingredients are altogether too simple and natural to equal the knowledge of chemicals. Mr. Denig dyed a good quantity today for Mrs. Culbertson."

spent the time setting affairs straight in the office and in overseeing the construction of a mackinaw boat to transport their goods to the new home. The Audubon party had decided to make the return down the river, as far as Fort Pierre, with them, and when the boat was ready, August 16, the two parties started out.

The trip down took about three weeks, a pleasantly monotonous three weeks of moving down this broad, shallow expanse of river, broken by occasional stops for hunts, and visits to the A.F.C. posts located along the way. At night they put into shore and tied up, but slept in the boat. One night, however, a storm came up unexpectedly, rocking and lashing the boat so frightfully that they all hurriedly left it. "Mrs. Culbertson with her child in her arms, made for the willows, and had a shelter for her babe in a few minutes."²⁹

At Fort Pierre the two parties separated, the Culbertsons to go over land to the Laramie post, a distance of some 350 miles. Here they remained for two years, conducting the retail post of Fort John.³⁰

In 1845 they returned to the Missouri river country to

29. Audubon, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 163.

30. This was a distributing point for three outposts, one on White Earth river, one on Old Woman's Fork of the Cheyenne, and one on Horse Creek. Bradley, op. cit., p. 235.

start a new post among the Blackfeet, to take the place of Fort McKenzie.³¹ This post called Fort Lewis,³² in honor of Meriwether Lewis, was located at the head of the first rapids above the present Fort Benton, on the south side of the river. This enterprise was a secret from the Indians, because their disposition toward the whites since the affair at McKenzie was not known, and until the palisade was up Na-ta-wis-ta and the wives of the engages kept house in the boats, under the protection of a well-armed guard.

When the post was ready Culbertson sent a messenger to tell the Blackfeet, encamped on Belly river, that he had returned to their country to trade. He invited them to the post. So generous was their response that the returns of that season amounted to 1100 packs of robes besides many beaver pelts and other furs. These Culbertson took to Fort Union in the spring of 1846, Na-ta-wis-ta going with him as usual. They spent the summer at that post and did not return to Fort Union until December.

During their absence the post had had a famous visitor

31. See note 4.

32. Bradley, op.cit., p. 242. There seem to be a variety of names for this post. Jas. M. Arnoux, "Fort Benton", Manuscript, (Historical Library), says it was called Fort Cotton. Father DeSmet, Father DeSmet's Life and Travels Among the North America Indians, ed. Chittenden & Richardson (4 Vols., Harper, New York, 1905) Vol. 2, p. 597, calls it Maragnon.

in Father DeSmet, who, with Father Point was returning to the east from an extended journey in Oregon country. Father DeSmet had remained only long enough to rest, briefly, hold mass, and conduct a few services preliminary to the work to be left in the hands of Father Point, who would have charge of the Catholic mission at this place.

When Culbertson returned he saw to it that the Father was furnished with rooms for a chapel and a school where daily services were held with special masses on Sunday. All of the Indians of the post, and most of the white men attended the services, and many were baptised. Na-ta-wis-ta and Culbertson were perhaps married, according to the law of the white man, here, ³³ though this is not certain. Neither could have felt very keenly the need to do so. Na-ta-wis-ta, married according to the customs of her own people, among whom she lived, could have felt but little

33. Irwin, op.cit. Mrs. Irwin writes: "My father and mother were married in the year of 1847 by Father DeSmet." If they were married in 1847 it was probably Father Point who performed the ceremony at Fort Lewis. But if this were true Father DeSmet did not know of it in 1858 when he wrote, op.cit. Vol. 4, p. 1500, the following in a letter to E. T. Denig, a former employee of the A.F.C. but at this time retired to a farm near Red River (now Winnipeg), "About a fortnight ago I received a visit from Major Culbertson; he is now settled with his family near Peoria, Illinois; he requests me to visit him and to remain some days with him to enable him to arrange matters and things. I think he intends to marry his wife and to have her instructed and baptised. I intend to visit him soon. He placed his daughters in a convent in St. Louis."

urge, except perhaps to conform to the teachings of the good Father Point. The motive force, if there were any, must have come from Culbertson. But he was not a great observer of conventions, and out here in this wilderness post church marriage must have counted very little with him. For these reasons I think it much more likely that their marriage took place in 1858, when, back with his own people, where he had bought property and intended to settle, he felt the need to stabilize the position of the wife who had given him three daughters³⁴ and two sons. However, both were eager to assist Father Point in his good work; their marriage would have served as a precedent for the other employees of the post and Father Point must have urged it with insistence.

In any case Na-ta-wis-ta must have found it difficult to harmonize the religion of the whites with that of her own people. The God of Father Point must have seemed far away, impersonal, whereas Sun was so close, warm and

34. Naney died in childhood. Julia, later the wife of Attorney-General George H. Roberts of Nebraska; Mrs. Roberts died in Boise, Idaho, in 1929, about 83 years old. Fannie, now Mrs. Frances C. Irwin, Long Beach, California. Jack, died sometime before 1893. Joe, died some ten years ago. Authority for above is C. B. Lohmiller, Letter, Historical Library. Mr. Lohmiller was agent at Poplar, Fort Peck Reservation, from 1893-1921. Mrs. Irwin, op.cit.

35
 reassuring. And when Nancy, a child 3 or 4 years old,
 36
 stumbled into the river and was drowned before anyone
 could rush to her, Na-ta-wis-ta must have felt that Sun
 was very angry at her deflection. She prostrated herself
 to Sun.

It was difficult, too, to rely wholly on Him when
 little Julia, her second baby, was choking to death with
 the croup; her frantic prayers alternated between formal,
 halting appeals to God and rushes of heart-felt supplication
 to Sun. And when all efforts to save the life of this
 little girl, their only child now, had seemed to fail,
 poor Na-ta-wis-ta retracted everything she had sought to
 believe about God and slipped back hastily to the comfort
 of Sun. She had her husband send for the Medicine woman who
 gave the suffering child a steam bath by throwing water on
 hot stones, chanting monotonous incantations the while.
 And when the austere Father Point, hearing the weird
 wailing chant, left his breakfast to hustle the old woman

35. Even white men who had lived long with the Indians some-
 times found the religion of the Blackfeet more
 comforting than that of their own people. Such a one
 was Old Bird, white renegade who was credited with
 leading many Indian attacks against the whites. He
 lived to a wretched old age, when twisted and broken
 with rheumatism, he cursed bitterly the God of the
 whites but turned with prayers of supplication toward
 "Sun". Schultz, Interview.

36. Pohmiller, op.cit.

37

from the sick room, poor Na-ta-wis-ta must have felt confident that he, in league with the Evil One, was doing his utmost to rob her of her little one. More than ever she was confirmed in the belief that Sun was all-powerful. But perhaps when the child suddenly took a turn for the better, became well again, her strong feeling against God and His emissary reluctantly subsided, and she tried again to understand the God of her husband's people, as so many of her friends of the post were seeking to do.

Father Point had accomplished much good during his residence at the post; austere religious, he rebuked immorality and was zealous in his efforts to convert the Indians to the holy faith; he insisted on marriage of the white men to their Indian wives, over whom he had quickly gained much influence. When he left the next spring, when the post was moved down the river to the present site of Fort Benton, there must have been a deep breath of relief, and a comfortable slipping back into the old easy ways of living; Sun ruled again, and the Indians were free in their ceremonials to Him.

But Na-ta-wis-ta and her husband, taking the returns for the year, were not at the new Fort Lewis after Father

Point left. The two parties went together as far as Union, where the Culbertsons spent the summer, with the exception of about a month when they conducted Col. Redfield, Crow agent, to Fort Alexander, to issue the annuities for that tribe. In the fall they returned to Fort Lewis but from this time on their time was spent going from one post to another, for Culbertson was in 1848 or 49 made agent of the Upper Missouri Outfit,³⁸ "King of the Upper Missouri". The duties of this new position kept him on the move more than ever, and Na-ta-wis-ta saw many new cities, visited many new friends.

It is impossible to follow in detail their wanderings of the next few years, but in 1848 they spent the spring and summer months in the east visiting friends and relatives of Culbertson. Here again Na-ta-wis-ta lived, briefly, the life of cities. No doubt she found many changes had taken place in the ten years since she had visited St. Louis as a bride. The dresses and trinkets that she had cherished so long would have been out-moded. The hours in the shops would be spent with more serious intent now, for both she and her husband must be ready for inspection by his family. No doubt Na-ta-wis-ta felt somewhat uncertain in her pur-

38. Bradley, op.cit., p. 244; p. 260 (The year was 1848).

chases. She need not have been afraid; she was well received and her beautiful black-eyed baby was made much of by all who saw her. It was with reluctance that their friends saw them start back for the mountains.

They remained for the winter in Fort Union where Na-ta-wis-ta spent most of the time nursing her husband, whose ill health had kept them from returning to Fort Lewis, which post they regarded as home, although with his new position Culbertson had the privilege of selecting any post he desired for headquarters. In the spring he was again able to continue his work, journeying back and forth from post to post on inspection trips, conducting Indian agents on hasty visits to their charges, and all the work the representative of the Company on the upper Missouri was called upon to do. In 1850, at a Christmas celebration, the name of Fort Lewis was changed to Fort Benton, in honor of Senator Thomas H. Benton, who had done so much to promote the welfare of the American Fur Company.

About this time, probably in 1850, Na-ta-wis-ta's third child was born, a girl, whom they named Fannie. They spent the winter in Fort Benton, which Culbertson was having rebuilt of adobe. In the spring the family went to Fort Union when the returns were taken down, and probably remained there during that summer while Culbertson took a band of horses to Fort Pierre and led a delegation of all the

upper Missouri river tribes to a grand council held at
 39
 Fort Laramie in August.

From this time on Culbertson represented his company repeatedly in affairs of this kind; he had come to have a reputation for knowing and understanding the Indians and whenever there was need of such a person to conduct government representatives he was called upon. Na-ta-wis-ta accompanied him on a good many of these expeditions, just as she had always done. She was hostess to her husband's guests and, like him, won a reputation for her kind
 40
 hospitality to both Indians and whites.

39. There is no certainty that Mrs. Culbertson was not along on this trip but I do not find her mentioned by DeSmet, op.cit. although Culbertson himself is given as the leader of the party. He went in a carriage so it is entirely possible that Na-ta-wis-ta and the children went along.

40. Irwin, op.cit., "she did so many acts of kindness both to the Whites and the Indians that she was known all over the country."

Gov. I. I. Stevens, "Fort Union", Narrative and Final Report of Exploration For A Route For A Pacific Railroad, Senate Documents, (35 Cong. 2 Session), Vol. 12, p. 86: "His wife, a full blood Indian of the Blood band of the Blackfeet tribe, is also deservedly held in high estimation. Though she appears to have made little or no progress in our language she has acquired the manners and adapted herself to the usages of the white race with singular facility. Their children have been sent to the states to be educated in our best schools."

Ibid., "....On this, as on previous occasions, Mrs. Culbertson, a native of the Blood tribe of Blackfeet, was unwearied and efficient in her good offices." p. 83.
 Irwin, op.cit., "Gov. Stevens presented my mother with a beautiful silver loving cup with the inscription 'To The Second Pocahontas'."

The bourgeoisie at Fort Benton at this time was Andrew Dawson. He was a hard-headed Scotchman with an ambition to be "King of the Upper Missouri". He set out definitely to replace Culbertson in the affairs of the company and succeeded,⁴¹ apparently, for Culbertson withdrew from the company in 1861 and took up his residence on the fine show farm "Locust Grove" near Peoria, Ill., which he had bought a few years before and on which he had already installed his family.⁴² Here the family lived lavishly. They had many friends and Na-ta-wis-ta and her husband held open house. But neither was entirely happy; the Indian country called them. Culbertson sought to interest himself in fine horses and cattle which brought him blue ribbons in state fairs as far east as Cincinnati; he engaged an English landscape gardener and had the place laid out to resemble

41. Robert Morgan, Letter, Historical Library: "...I have heard from other quarters that you have taken your old friend Culbertson's place and that you are now 'king of the Missouri'. I was glad when I heard the news but I was not astonished as I knew perfectly well if you managed to unseat him that there was no one on the Missouri as fit for the position as yourself."

42. Joe Culbertson, their second son and youngest child, was born here January 31, 1859. See his Application for Membership to Society of Montana Pioneers, Historical Library.

an estate in England.⁴³ Na-ta-wis-ta and Culbertson were here married according to church law, Father DeSmet coming up from St. Louis to perform the ceremony,⁴⁴ and instruct and baptise Na-ta-wis-ta under the name of Isabel.⁴⁵ This ceremony could have made no real difference in the position Na-ta-wis-ta occupied in her home,⁴⁶ but it probably made Culbertson feel more comfortable now that they were living in a civilized community among friends and relatives. Moreover it provided, by law, for his wife and children should sudden or accidental death overtake him, leaving his poor

43. Irwin, op.cit.: "My father's family lived on a farm seven miles from Peoria, Illinois; the place was named 'Locust Grove', a very beautiful and picturesque place, laid out by an English landscape gardener; on this estate he had many fine thoroughbred horses and cattle; one team of blacks (carriage horses) that were his pride; he sent them to many state fairs as far as Cincinnati, Ohio, never failing to carry off the Blue Ribbon. He also owned a fine home on the outskirts of Peoria overlooking the river. It was one of the show places of the surrounding country and was eventually sold the city as a museum."

Mr. Robert Culbertson, Interview. Mr. Culbertson is the son of the late Robert Culbertson, a nephew of Alexander Culbertson: "When Culbertson left the Upper Missouri he was worth about \$250,000.00 but Senator Thos. H. Benton and other St. Louis men interested him in various enterprises that helped to make away with most of his money. This is what probably happened to the most of it although his farm and home in Peoria took a small fortune to maintain." Mr. Culbertson lives in Fort Benton at the present time.

44. See note 33.

45. Name given by her son Joe in his Application for Membership to Society of Montana Pioneers, Historical Library.

46. Irwin, op.cit.; "A splendid mother whose children were devotedly attached to her."

Na-ta-wis-ta and her children to the uncertain beneficence of his relatives, kind though they had been. Moreover it was the thing for a decent man to do.

So they were married and sought, restlessly, to settle down to the life of the country. But this seems to have been impossible. Their estate large though it was, made them feel crowded; the activities of the day seemed so petty and unimportant. They longed for their old, hard life of fur trading days, when, their belongings all in a boat or on horses, they moved from post to post, living on the country. The excitement of the buffalo hunt, when Culbertson brought down his own meat, and Na-ta-wis-ta, if it were necessary, cut it up, slicing out the deponille and taking the tongue, special tidbits, first. And what marvelous food it was and how wonderful life had been! They lived it all again in memory, and sighed, and tried to feel grateful for the fine home they had. But they were restless.

The year 1862 found the family in Ft. Benton, having come up on the Spread Eagle or the Key West, both boats of the Comp

47. This was the first year of the LaBarge opposition company. LaBarge had brought his company up in the Emilie and the Shreveport. While they were in Benton a party was made up to visit the Great Falls of the Missouri. Mrs. Culbertson was of this party. Others were: Father DeSmet, Eugene Jaccard, Giles Tillard and son, Mrs. John LaBarge, W. G. Harkness, Margaret Harkness (his daughter), Tom LaBarge. Chittenden, Early Steam Boat Navigation on the Missouri River, (2 Vols., New York, Harper, 1903), Vol. 1, p. 293.

They spent this summer at the government Indian farm on Sun River, the guests of Col. Reed, Indian agent. In the fall they went down the river in a mackinaw boat with a party of Missouri rebels, returning safely through a country thick with threatening Indians.⁴⁸ They spent the winter on their farm near Peoria but the spring again saw them on their way to the country they were finding it so hard to leave. This time they went up on the Robert Campbell, Captain Joseph LaBarge; enroute they ran into Indian trouble at Tobacco Gardens⁴⁹ where a band of Sioux attacked

48. Larpenteur, op.cit., Vol. 1, pp. 363-369.
 Chittenden, op.cit., Vol. 2, p. 304 et passim.
Collections of State Historical Society of North Dakota
 (Bismark, 1908), Vol. 2, p. 272: "Little Joe Culbertson done some fine dancing. June 11, 1863."
49. a. A bottom at the outlet of Tobacco Creek on the left or north bank of the Missouri, 88 miles below the mouth of the Yellowstone.
 b. A number of garbled accounts of this affair have been given. The following, Larpenteur, op.cit., pp. 363-369, is context of a quote from Boller: A band of friendly Gros Ventres called for a boat to be sent to show that they wanted to trade fresh meat. While this trade was being made a small band of Sioux swooped down upon the two parties, shooting at the boat. Mrs. Culbertson's sharp eye soon descried some distant objects which proved to be a party of Sioux, about 200, moving to intercept the boats. The Shreveport dropped back down stream and both boats were made fast to a sandbar not far from Tobacco Garden Creek, while the Indians gathered on the bank, protested and partly concealed in the woods. There was no discipline on the Campbell, Captain Joseph LaBarge, and no one seemed to know what to do. The Indians yelled to the whites to come ashore and be killed; that they wanted arms, munition, and provisions; that the whites were dogs, fit
 (Continued on page 33)

the boat while they were bartering for fresh meat with friendly Gros Ventres. Mrs. Culbertson who understood Sioux, warned the captain of the threats the Indians were making; after considerable difficulty and the loss of a number of lives the Robert Campbell got under weigh and escaped further trouble.


These yearly journeys continued, Culbertson usually seeking some sort of work, as interpreter, or some connection with the Department of Indian Affairs, which would take him up the Missouri on the first boat in the spring, his own eagerness to be back on the river seconded by that of Na-ta-wis-ta. Their two daughters were in a Catholic school in St. Louis, where they showed evidence of becoming striking beauties.

49. (Continued from page 32) only to be killed --with other demands, taunts, and threats to like effect. A boat was got ready and sent ashore with some annunties, at the suggestion of Agents Latta and Reed, evidently to the surprise of many of the passengers who understood the Indians. As the yawl left the boat Mrs. Culbertson called out to the crew "Come back! Come back! You'll all be killed." But the boat went on. The Indians attacked it. The two steamboats then shot off their guns and the Indians took cover in the willows, permitting the two parties to get away about three o'clock. The yawl floated back down stream and was recovered. Only two men were found alive. The bodies were buried on the bank somewhat above the scene of the trouble.

50. Sue Bartlett, Letter. (Historical Library, 1932)

".....I know that a daughter Fannie(?) was a very handsome woman and married C. H. Roberts, Attorney-General of Nebraska." This was Julia. Fannie became Mrs. Irwin. Alexander Culbertson was the brother of Sue Bartlett's grandfather.

It is doubtful if either grieved much when, after perhaps 10 years of luxurious spending and numerous unwise investments, the \$250,000.00 with which they had left the Indian country had dwindled to mere pocket money.⁵¹ Undaunted by the loss, they packed up their personal belongings and returned to the only country where they knew how to make a living. They left Peoria by rail, in 1868, for St. Louis where they took boat for the Upper Missouri country.⁵²

But Fort Benton had changed; it was no longer a trading post carrying on all its activities within cramping walls. It had outgrown this protection and lay alongside the river, its one straggling street petering off into open prairie, congested by long mule and oxen teams hauling huge  (Diamond R) freight wagons. Fort Benton had become, within the last few years, the head of navigation. Its chief trade now was with the mines; the old American Fur Company had sold out, and the old post, abandoned, lay crumbling in the sun. The Indians who had brought in

51. See note 43.

Of course they did not enjoy losing the money; it is never pleasant to have to admit to one's self that he has backed the wrong horse.

52. Joe Culbertson, Application for Membership in Society of Montana Pioneers, says he thinks they came up on the Red Cloud but I cannot find it listed among the steamboat arrivals of 1868. Mr. Hilger, Historical Library, says the Red Cloud was a fine large boat.

hundreds of prime robes in the old days now gathered in
bands and ravaged emigrant trains and were punished for it. ⁵³
It was sad knowledge for Na-ta-wis-ta. Her people were
being crowded out of the country of their fathers and
their every attempt to withstand the white man brought
bloody punishment. Na-ta-wis-ta, remembering the vast
lovely emptiness through which they had moved in free, un-
hampered living, wept for them.

She and her husband sought out their old friends and
over long pipes the men discussed the changes that their
white father had brought into the lives of his Indian
children, and then, sadly, compared the new crowded condi-
tion of the country to the good old days when only the
Indians' travois poles marked up the prairies, when there
were no new little settlements like Fort Benton marring the
scene with their raw ugliness, and when the village on the
way to buffalo, might set up their lodges where they would,
seeking only water and grass. For Na-ta-wis-ta, only 47
years old, these were sad reminiscences, but comforting,
too.

They found, too, that the old leisurely methods of
trade of the post days had given way to a hustle and bustle,
that, merely to observe, wore them out. Fort Benton, they

53. Baker Massacre of 1870, for example.

admitted, was a disappointment. They wanted more than Fort Benton; they wanted the Fort Benton they had known and made.

In 1869 Alexander Culbertson and his nephew Robert Culbertson decided to go back into the Indian trade. There was no opportunity in Fort Benton: to Culbertson, with his hunger for the conditions of his own trading days, it seemed vastly overcrowded. They would go to Na-ta-wis-ta's people,⁵⁴ the Bloods of the North. The plan made Na-ta-wis-ta very happy for she had not seen her people since the old days at Fort Benton. Then she had visited them often, when they had been in the neighborhood, going in and out of the post as⁵⁵ she chose, with her own horses.

Na-ta-wis-ta's immediate family had all gone to the Sand Hills but a cousin, Grey Eyes, was still living and was a man of influence in the tribe. He helped them build a⁵⁶ post and brought them trade; but the venture was not the success fur trading had been even ten years before. After one season they were ready to give it up. Na-ta-wis-ta, however, was not willing to return so soon. This woman, who, ten years before had lived in one of the finest estates in

54. Culbertson, Interview.

55. Fort Benton Journal (Manuscript in Historical Library) has many entries that justify this interpretation; as: "Today Mrs. C. started with carriage, 4 mules, and 2 men for camp."

56. Culbertson, Interview.

the middle west, who, as hostess of that estate had dispensed hospitality to countless guests with surprising grace, now returned happily to live in a skin lodge, to cook over an open fire, and sleep on a bed of skins. She was with her own people. After years among alien whites this was enough.

They left her there, on a "visit". But Na-ta-wis-ta⁵⁷ never returned from her people. Perhaps she intended to do so but life was very pleasant and in no time at all it was as if she had never been a great lady in a big house. Her daughters, well married, were happy with their white husbands. Her sons, too, had no need of her. They were in school in St. Louis, and perhaps, when they had finished--- It may have been that Culbertson intended to rejoin his wife among her people, and perhaps he did return there but if so it was only on short trips. In 1870 he served as⁵⁸ interpreter at the Fort Belknap reservation, and he had various positions of this sort about the Indian agencies in the region.

But in 1879 he died at the home of his daughter, Mrs.

57. This is given on my own authority. I find frequent entries in the Fort Belknap Journal (Manuscript, Historical Library) about Culbertson's coming and going in 1870-1871. Mrs. Culbertson is not mentioned.
58. Ibid.

59

G. H. Roberts, in Orleans, Nebraska. Na-ta-wis-ta was not with him at the time and she did not return there. The body lies there alone in the village cemetery.

60

Na-ta-wis-ta remained with her people. There was no reason now for her ever to leave them. She lived to the age of 71, dying on the Blood reservation near Cardston, Alberta, in 1893. ⁶¹ In her old age she reverted very much to her Indian nature, and one seeing her pottering about her lodge or feeding her wisp of fire would never guess that this old squaw, whose eyes could become so piercingly bright on occasion, had once been the cynosure of admiring youthful glances as she entered the dining room of the Planters' hotel on the arm of her white husband.

59. Chittenden, American Fur Trade of the Far West, says Orleans, Missouri, but this is a mistake.

60. Schultz, Sign Posts of Adventure, p. 117; "Sacred Snake Woman in her old age went to visit her Kaina relatives, on Belly River, Alberta, and there died."

61. Irwin, op.cit., Culbertson, Interview: "She (Na-ta-wis-ta) is buried in the Indian cemetery on the Blood Reserve near the Catholic Mission, Alberta, Canada."

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When the supper was ready it was put upon the oil-cloth covered table, sometimes improvised of the grub-boxes, though often these were built on the side of the wagon box, and the family, always hungry after these long days in the open, settled around it as comfortably as if there were four walls about them.

The evenings were spent in various ways; campfire visits, walks to nearby land marks, or posts if they were in the neighborhood of one, horseback rides to visit members of the next train, group singing, with mandolin or banjo accompaniment, dancing,¹⁸ religious meetings, and, on rare occasions, theatricals. This part of the day was looked forward to for there is something marvelously fascinating in a campfire, glowing warmly in the dark, with friends gathered close about, talking and smoking. The men took turns at the night herding, there being, as a rule, at least one man from each wagon. The next day these slept as best they could in rocking, jolting wagons, which someone else in the party drove, often the wife or daughter.

Camp was usually broken early so that a long noon rest could be taken for the sake of the animals. Sometimes the train would remain in camp for a day or two,

18. Dickson, op.cit., p.153.